

## House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel Holds Hearing on Recruiting, Retention and End Strength

### LIST OF PANEL MEMBERS AND WITNESSES

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DAVIS:

The meeting will come to order.

Today, the subcommittee will turn its attention to the important issue of end strength within the active and reserve components of our armed forces and the personnel programs that are the building blocks of those forces, recruiting and retention.

During the fiscal year 2005 through 2007, the recruiting environment had been difficult. That's something that we're all familiar with: relatively low unemployment, a protracted war on terrorism, and increased interest in college attendance all contributed to a reduced propensity for youths to serve, and a reluctance for influencers to recommend military careers.

Recruiting and retention programs were under great stress. And the services resorted to increased spending to keep the volunteer force on track.

Many of those funding increases were supported with wartime supplemental appropriations. And the uncertainty of supplemental funds to support programs, such as recruiting and retention, had been a concern of the subcommittee.

During fiscal year 2008, a new environment began to take shape as housing markets and financial institutions began to crumble and the national economy slipped into recession.

The unemployment rate grew 7.6 percent in January. And payroll employment has declined by 3.6 million since December 2007.

This new, economic reality -- and I must say, this is not something we're happy about,

but it has had an upside in many ways, and we'll be talking about that -- this new economic reality has been shaping the attitudes of young recruit candidates and servicemembers and their families about enlisting and re-enlisting in the military, in the same way that it continues to shape the attitudes of millions of Americans about employment and job security.

The effect on recruiting and retention has been remarkable. Recruit quality programs that had been of such great concern to this subcommittee, just a few, short months ago, have virtually evaporated.

With only a few exceptions -- and there are some -- goals are being achieved. End strengths are growing. And forces are being reshaped to meet the demands of this global war.

During the hearing today, we hope to learn more from our active and reserve leaders about what needs to be done to create the most effective and efficient forces possible.

Unfortunately, this bright picture has a dark side that cannot be escaped. Budget managers will now begin to stop these programs for savings, and rightly so. Because, as recruitment and retention become easier, one must assume it can be done more cost-effectively.

The question before us today is how all the goals, growth, and reshaping will be achieved with far less funding than what has been available up to this point.

We have two excellent panels to help us explore these issues. I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to discuss our reserve forces in greater detail during the second panel, when we will hear testimony from our reserve component chief.

I would request that all witnesses keep their oral opening to three minutes, as much as you can. We know that's difficult. You have a lot to say. There is a lot of history here. But if you can keep it to that, it will help us out.

Without objection, all written statements will be entered into the record.

I now want to turn to the ranking chair (sic), Mr. Wilson, for any opening comments.

WILSON:

Thank you, Chairwoman Davis.

We have two excellent witness panels today. And I really can't wait for the American people to see each of you. I've been so impressed in meeting with you individually.

And as I look out, I'm just in awe of the professionals who are here today who provide extraordinary opportunities to the young people of our country to serve.

Your efforts have directly contributed to the extraordinary success of the active and reserve components, in not only sustaining the all-volunteer force during a highly stressful time, but also, in the case of the Army and Marine Corps and Army National Guard, in substantially accelerating the growth of the force.

I want to thank each of our witnesses for their efforts.

With regard to growth, the Army and Marine Corps sought strength of 547,400 and 202,000, respectively, to be achieved in 2011 or beyond. Amazingly, they will achieve those strengths before the end of the year.

The Army National Guard has already exceeded its 2013 strength goal of 358,000.

This accelerated growth reflects the effects of the final budget submitted by President Bush and the subsequent fine work by our witnesses today.

And I represent Fort Jackson for the Army training. And I'm grateful to represent Parris Island for Marine training. So I've seen it firsthand.

And I do know firsthand of the rewarding experience to military service, having served 31 years in the Army Reserve and National Guard.

I am grateful I have four sons who know of the fulfillment of military service.

My oldest is a National Guard veteran of Iraq. My second is an active-duty member of the Navy, who I visited a year ago today in his service in Iraq. My third is a National Guard signal officer currently in training at Fort Jackson. And my youngest is Army ROTC at Clemson University. And in December, he joined the National Guard's simultaneous drill program.

And I, of course, want to give credit to my wife for inspiring them to serve.

Your recruiting and retention efforts are providing wonderful, lifelong opportunities for the young people of America.

The challenge for President Obama's 2009 supplemental funding proposal, and for the 2010 budget request, is to sustain that accelerated growth in the Army, Marine Corps, and Army National Guard.

Moreover, I understand that both the Navy and the Air Force will seek to increase strength in 2010 and beyond. I look forward to the details of the president's budget request next month to see if that additional Navy and Air Force growth is provided.

I firmly believe that our military needs to be larger to address this full range of missions we have levied upon it and the threats we face, and to ensure that the stress on the force and the families who support it is minimized.

Any calls, now, to reduce military manpower to fund modernization would be shortsighted. Both the Air Force and Navy have reached that conclusion. I would hope the Congress will, too.

The keys to sustaining increasing military manpower are recruiting, retention, and control of unplanned attrition. Our two panels today can help us to understand the challenges in each of those areas.

So I want to join you, Madam Chairwoman, in welcoming our witnesses. And I look forward to their testimony.

Additionally, last year, I was very grateful, with the chairwoman, to visit the recruiting and retention school at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. And we saw firsthand, again, the extraordinary personnel who are working to provide opportunity for the young people of our country.

DAVIS:

Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

And I'd like to introduce our first panel: Dr. Curtis Gilroy, who is the Director of the Accessions Policy Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; General Michael Rochelle, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 Headquarters, U.S. Army; Vice Admiral Mark Ferguson, Chief of Navy Personnel, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Total Force; Lieutenant General Ronald Coleman, Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Lieutenant General Richard Newton, Depute Chief of Staff, Manpower and Personnel Headquarters, U.S. Air Force.

Thank you all for being here. And we look forward to your comments.

Dr. Gilroy?

GILROY:

Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Wilson, distinguished members of the subcommittee and staff, thank you for inviting us to discuss our recruiting and retention programs with you today.

And I'm delighted to report to you that the state of recruiting and retention for our active-duty force, as we are one-third of the way through fiscal year 2009, is a success.

Let me make three points in the limited time that I have.

Point number one: The services have done a remarkable job in recruiting a quality force in an environment that has been characterized by most as the most challenging since the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973. I know this because I have studied this. I have written about the volunteer force. And I have helped manage the volunteer force for 30 years.

As the economy continues to dip and unemployment rises, recruiting should be somewhat less difficult. We know this. But the economy is not the only driver of our attention in our recruiting programs.

We have other significant challenges that are facing us today. And let me just talk briefly about those.

Influencers of youth, for example -- Chair, you mentioned that just a moment ago -- are much less likely to recommend military service to young people today than they did two, three, four years ago -- parents, teachers, coaches, guidance counselors.

And we know that propensity among youth themselves is much less than it is -- today than it was two, three, four years ago.

We also know that we have a declining pool of eligible and qualified young people in American today who want to serve, owing mostly to health, physical fitness issues, and education problems.

We have a crisis in this country, don't we? We have an obesity problem amongst our youth.

And we have an education crisis as well: 70 to 75 percent of young people today have a high school diploma, a bona fide high school diploma. That's a sad state of affairs.

So, when we add all of its qualifiers, we find that only 25 percent of our young people today, age 17 to 24, are qualified for military service -- not a good situation.

We have an ongoing global war on terror and the associated operations tempo.

And lastly, we have the need to maintain end strength for the Army and the Marine Corps at relatively high levels.

These are our challenges, despite the fact that unemployment is rising and the economy is slacking.

Point number two: To the extent that there will be pressure for budgetary realignment and budget cuts, if you will, and these will be directed to our recruiting and retention programs, I ask that we move cautiously and deliberately when we consider these.

Historically, when the economy weakens, and recruiting and retention became less challenging, these programs have been ripe for cut.

Recall the crisis in the late 1970s, as a result of significant -- and I should say, careless cuts during those times. Recall the problems in the mid-1980s for the same reason. And recall the issues in the late 1990s, when all four services missed their recruiting goals in either 1998 or 1999, for the very same reason.

These lessons from the past showed us that it is easy and quick to cut budgets during times when recruiting and retention are successful. But we also learn from those lessons of the past how difficult, and how time-consuming, and how expensive it is when we need to ramp up, when recruiting and retention failed as a result of those budget cuts.

If we do not pay attention to the history lessons, we are doomed to repeat these sins of the past. And that is why we are working together, the services and OSD, to review our recruiting and retention programs to ensure funding adequacy without excess.

Finally, in conclusion, the success of our voluntary military, during good times and during challenging times, results directly from this subcommittee's continued support, for which we are very, very grateful.

We have recently celebrated 35 years, our 35th anniversary of our volunteer military. And we thank you for your significant role in the success over those years.

We stand by to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

General Rochelle?

ROCHELLE:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman; Ranking Member Wilson, distinguished members of the subcommittee, good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. And thank you for your wonderful and continued support.

The past few years have been a significant era in the history of our nation's Army, as we have faced the multiple challenges to keep the Army vibrant, balanced, and successful, while able to defend our country against some of the most persistent and wide-ranging threats in our nation's history.

Our success in those endeavors has been due in large part to the support of the Congress and the support the Congress has given us through the many programs that been instituted since the nation went to war in 2001.

First and foremost, you have given us the means to recruit and retain an agile army. As a result, over the past two years, we've met or exceeded our recruiting and retention goals for the total army.

You've supported initiatives that have allowed us to transform our force into one army that consistently uses the talents of our active reserve and National Guard soldiers, as well as our civilian team members.

We could not have succeeded without your support. You have given us the means to improve the quality of life for our soldiers and their families. And soldiers are remaining in the Army because they see it as a higher calling of service and a great place to raise a family.

You've given us the means to care for our wounded soldiers. And, paraphrasing the

prophetic words of George Washington, one of the strongest indicators of a healthy force is the way the nation cares for its wounded. Our Wounded Warrior programs have proven to our soldiers and their families that this nation will not forget their sacrifices, nor will they be forgotten.

This support has helped us sustain the health of an Army that has endured the longest period of combat and conflict in our nation's history. The Army continues to face challenges, but it is our intent to stay in front of those challenges, anticipating them and developing strategies and programs that will keep America's Army strong.

The eligible population to serve in our armed forces has declined over the past decade. And we must continue to work hard to attract and retain the very best.

The challenging environments that our soldiers serve in require more, targeted recruitment. And we must remain ever vigilant that our force is manned to meet the various crises that continue to develop around the globe.

We must also deal with such issues as -- such painful issues, I might add -- as suicides over the past few months. I'm confident, however, that the operational, institutional agility of this Army, that this Army has developed over the past eight years -- with it, we will meet the challenges that will come our way.

In closing, your leadership, your support has been unwavering. I have appreciated the discussions we have had, over the years, concerning the health of the Army. And I look forward to your questions today.

Thank you.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Admiral Ferguson?

FERGUSON:

Chairwoman Davis, Representative Wilson, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee, it is a pleasure to review with you today the Navy's recruiting and retention efforts, as well as our end strength projections for this year.



We remain a global Navy, with over 40 percent of our forces under way or deployed. We have increased our operational availability through the fleet response plan and are engaging in new mission areas in support of the joint force.

We continue to play a key role in support of joint operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and across the globe by providing approximately 14,000 sailors as individual augmentees.

With this high operational tempo, we remain vigilant concerning stress on our sailors and their families. We ensure that sailors have adequate opportunity to rest and spend time at home between deployments, and provide them a comprehensive continuum of care.

The tone of the force is positive. Sailors and their families continue to express satisfaction with the morale and leadership at their commands, their health care, benefits, and compensation.

Over the past year, we have been successful in recruiting high- quality sailors. In 2008, we achieved our enlisted and officer goals across both the active and reserve components, while exceeding DOD quality standards in all recruit categories.

For the first time in five years, we achieved our overall active and reserve medical officer recruiting goals.

Beginning in 2008 and continuing into this year, the comprehensive benefits provided by the Congress for our servicemembers, combined with the current, economic conditions, have resulted in an increased retention and lower attrition across the force.

To ensure the long-term health of the force, we are transitioning from a posture of reducing end strength to one we term "stabilizing the force."

To meet global demands and minimize stress on the force, the Secretary of the Navy used his end-strength waiver authority for 2008 and 2009. We project to finish 2009 within 2 percent above our statutory end-strength limit.

Our stabilization efforts have been directed at sustaining a high-quality force, able to respond to new mission areas within our fiscal authorities.

We are guided by the following principles.

One, continue to attract and recruit our nation's best and brightest.

Retain the best sailors and target incentives to retain those with critical skills.

Balance the force, in terms of seniority, experience, and skills matched to projected requirements.

Safeguard the careers of our top performers.

And provide the fleet and joint force stable and predictable manning.

On behalf of all the men and women in uniform who sacrifice daily, and their families, I want to extend my sincere appreciation to you and the members of the committee for their unwavering support for our Navy.

Thank you.

DAVIS:

Thank you very much.

And General Coleman?

COLEMAN:

Chairwoman Davis, Congressman Wilson, distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today along with Lieutenant General Jack Bergman, Commander of the Marine Forces Reserve.

I'd like to make a few key points.

First, in regard to our end-strength growth, the Marine Corps achieved unprecedented success in fiscal year '08, growing by over 12,000 Marines. We have since surpassed the 200,000 mark and fully expect to reach our goal of 202,000 during fiscal year '09, two years ahead of schedule.

We owe this historic success in large part to our recruiters who met all accession goals in fiscal year '08 while maintaining the highest quality standards. Thank you for your continued support of our enlistment incentives which make these achievements possible.

active component retention has also been successful. We achieved an unprecedented 36 percent retention rate among our first-time Marines, exceeding our 31 percent in fiscal year '07, which in itself was an historical high.

We thank you for your support of our selective re-enlistment bonus program. It is the foundation of our retention efforts. We will continue to require a robust level of SRB funding to increase retention in targeted and specialized MOSs so that we maintain a vital Marine Corps leadership and experience.

While we did miss our reserve authorized end strength by approximately 2,000, this was due in a large part to the focus we placed on the return and reserve personnel to the active force. As we close in our 202,000 plan, we will now refocus our efforts on increasing our Reserve end strength.

Lastly, I want to personally thank you for your staff's recent visit to our Wounded Warrior Regiment, West Battalion. I know our nation's wounded warriors are a top priority for you. And I can assure you that they are for the Marine Corps, too.

With our 202,000 end strength success in the near horizon, I want to thank you and other members of Congress for your support and partnership. The increased funding and flexibility authorizes that you provided are central to the strength that your Marine Corps enjoys today.

We will continue to rely on them as we grow and maintain 202,000, and as we work to shape the Marine Corps for the 21st Century so that we always will remain the most ready when the nation is least ready.

I look forward to your questions.

DAVIS:

Thank you very much.

And, General Newton? Thank you.

NEWTON:

Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Wilson, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss our efforts to ensure we attract, recruit, develop, and retain a high-quality and diverse fighting force for the world's most respected Air Force.

Today, airmen are fully engaged in joint operations across the globe and stand prepared for rapid response to asymmetric threat, as well as conventional conflicts.

Our priorities are clear, reinvigorating Air Force nuclear enterprise; partnering with the joint and coalition team to win today's fight; developing and caring for airmen and their families; modernizing our air and space inventories, organizations, and training; and recapturing acquisition excellence.

These priorities will shape the strategic landscapes that currently provide significant challenge to our organization systems' concepts and our doctrine. Regardless, today's airmen are doing amazing things for the joint war-fighting team.

Our aim is to improve capability by tapping into all available sources so we do not lose the war for America's talent. As such, the Air Force has made diversity a strategic imperative to ensure we remain prevalent as the greatest combat-ready air force in the world.

As we prepare for an uncertain future, we are transforming the force to ensure we have the right size and shape to meet emerging global threats with joint and battle-trained airmen.

For fiscal year 2008, our active duty officer corps met or exceeded all aggregate retention goals, while overall active duty enlisted retention rates finish below annual goals.

Whereas, retention is strong within our officer corps, a few pockets of concern exists among control and recovery health professionals and contracting.

The Air Force continues to develop both accession and retention incentives to ensure the right mix of health professionals.

Additionally, our most critical war-fighting skills require special focus on enlisted retention, due to demands on a high operations tempo placed on airmen who perform duties such as para- rescue, command-and-control, tactical air control party, and explosive ordnance disposal.

Just as important, we are committed to taking care of families and our wounded warriors as an essential piece of retaining an effective force.

In conclusion, our airmen are doing amazing things to meet the needs of the joint war-fighter.

To execute the mission and keep the Air Force on a vector for success against potential, future threats in that uncertain world of ours, the Air Force must safeguard our ability to see anything on the face of the earth, range it, observe it, or hold it at risk, supply, rescue,

support, or in cases, destroy it, all the while assessing the effect and exercise global command and control of all those activities.

Rising to the challenges of the 21st Century is not a choice. It's a responsibility to bequeath a dominant Air Force to America's joint team that will follow us in service to the nation.

We appreciate your unfailing support to the men, women, and families of our Air Force. And I look forward to your questions.

DAVIS:

Thank you very much. We certainly appreciate all the leadership that you've all brought. And I want to just let you know -- you've been so good about keeping within those time frames.

At the end of our discussion, I want to invite you to share with us any additional thoughts that you have that might not have been covered, as we entertain a number of questions from the members. Thank you for that.

One of the things that we're obviously very concerned about is, as you work within the budgets right now, are you being asked to operate recruiting and retention below the levels of 2008, and even below the levels, perhaps, of the first few months of fiscal year 2009?

Are you being stocked, as we said earlier? And how comfortable are you with that?

Do you think that we're in a position so that you are able to reduce those budgets?

And more importantly, whether or not you feel that emergency supplementals will be required to help you out, as we go along here?

Where are you? I mean, are you feeling that this is going to be something that is actually going to cut into your ability to do your jobs properly?

Who'd like to -- Dr. Gilroy, do you want to start? General Rochelle?

(UNKNOWN)

That's a fairly wide-ranging question, Madam Chair. Let me respond to it in this way.

First of all, the wisdom that -- and the advice given by this subcommittee -- and I would also mention the Appropriations Committee, as well -- to migrate recruiting and retention completely into the base, a few years back, was wise counsel. We are on track to do that in fiscal '10.

Having said that -- completely, I should say, across all components, in fiscal '10. Having said that, we have not significantly begun to throttle back yet, but we obviously will have to, in terms of meeting end strength. That will not be constrained as -- that will not be a direct result of budget impact, budgetary impact, beyond (OFF-MIKE)

DAVIS:

General Coleman?

COLEMAN:

Yes, ma'am.

Ma'am, I believe that as we reach -- we the Marine Corps, reach our 2,002 (sic), which was a far-reaching goal, and to be able to reach it two years ahead of time is a direct reflection on Congress' willingness and ability to provide us the incentives that we need.

I think, as we get closer, and as we reach the 202,000, the big part of the assignment then is to shape the force the way we really actually need it to be.

So I foresee that supplementals will certainly go away.

I would, as a manpower person in the Marine Corps, in order to get those military occupational specialties that we need to re-enlist, such as your linguists and your explosive ordnance personnel, we will need help. We will need continued help. But I think we fail you if we don't admit that, as we reach our goal, we would be able to throttle back somewhat, ma'am.

DAVIS:

Admiral Ferguson, do you want to comment?

FERGUSON:

Yes. Madam Chairman, the Navy takes a very tailored and strategic approach to both enlistment bonuses, retention bonuses. We look by skill set, by rating, and specialty.

And we've already taken actions, beginning in last September and again last month, to reduce or eliminate, for example, some selective re-enlistment bonuses where we see individuals re-enlisting at greater than our required levels. And so we feel very comfortable with the amount of support that we have in the budget.

But I want to assure you, we have an ongoing practice of assessing and evaluating those levels and adjusting them in response to what we see happening in the -- in the force.

NEWTON:

And, Chairwoman, for the United States Air Force, we're very much focused on, obviously, our people on our people programs. And so as I'm sure the other services do, we do not separate, for instance, recruiting and retention and so forth.

It's very much for -- as you well know, we are on a glide path to reduce our strength down to 316,600 on active duty roles for now. Our proposed budget now have us around 330,000 active duty. And so part of the challenge is, is to recruit not to a 316,000 number but now to a 330,000 number, as well as retaining our men and women across the force.

Generally, for recruiting, we feel very confident we're going to meet our recruiting goals. We also feel confident we'll meet our retention goals through FY09.

But it's not just going after that end strength of 330,000. It's focused on, again, how we shape the force for doing specific tasks at hand, not based on a legacy force of several years ago, but as we look forward, how do we shape that force to do what the joint war-fighter requires.

And so we've set our priorities focused not only on across-the- force, but some specifics and having clear insight into the data of who we need to maintain an active force.

FERGUSON:

And so, in sum, Madam Chair, the department is indeed committed to eliminating the requirements of supplemental funding for recruiting. There'll be a transition period required to do this, but the commitment is clearly there to make recruiting budgets and funding out of the base.

Thank you.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

And you have authorities within your budget, in terms of those areas where you feel that you can ramp up bonuses?

And there's no problem with that -- is that correct? Do you have any areas?

OK, great.

FERGUSON:

We have the flexibility (OFF-MIKE)

DAVIS:

All right. Thank you.

Mr. Wilson?

WILSON:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

General Rochelle, the Army's to be commended for very likely achieving its accelerated manpower growth by the end of the year. Also, I've been very impressed by the significant resources for the Wounded Warrior Program.

I've had the opportunity to see the facilities, the dedicated personnel, particularly at Walter Reed, at Bethesda, at Moncrief Hospital at Port Jackson. It's wonderful to see the attention given to our heroes.

But with the objective of 547,400, what is the status of providing for deploying units and maintaining proper personnel for such crucial programs as the Wounded Warrior Program?



ROCHELLE:

Thank you for your question, Ranking Member Wilson.

We are absolutely committed to our wounded warriors. I said in my oral statement and as you will certainly -- you may have already found in my written statement -- that's a commitment that's immutable.

Our FRAGO number 4, which was recently staffed, will move us closer to being able to take our wounded warriors from our reserve components as well as our active components and move them closer to family member or to home, thus reducing the strain on the facilities and the infrastructure which you spoke, but at the same time, providing a better environment for the soldier in which to heal.

Today, our wounded warrior population is down from a high of roughly 12,000 Active Guard and Reserves to 9,000 and declining even further, both as we ramp up and continue to provide the best medical care we can as the best medical care on the planet to our wounded warriors.

With respect to readiness, we will continue to ensure, through active retention, which I spoke in my oral statements, as well as recruiting, to provide our deployers with the qualified soldiers, the best-trained, best--equipped, and best-led to serve on my front lines.

WILSON:

Additionally, General Coleman, the success of the Army, success of the Marine Corps in achieving the end strength of 202,000 -- and nothing's more inspiring than going to Fort Jackson or to Parris Island to see the young people graduating, to see the families and the success.

But is 202,000 sufficient for the threat that our country faces in the future?

COLEMAN:

Yes, sir. We believe that, when General Conway came on board, what he wanted to do was right-size the Marine Corps. And we felt that 202,000 was the right size, the right number, the right size in the Marine Corps, to allow us to do the things that we aren't able to do right now as we fight the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As we get to that number, we feel that 2002 is, in fact, the correct number to allow us to fight and train for the next fight.

WILSON:

And for both of you, I'd like to commend you on what's being done for families with the highest percentage ever of married troops. Families are truly given a priority in housing, schools, day care. Thank you for what you've done.

For Admiral Ferguson and General Newton, the Navy and the Air Force end strength -- there's been a decline over the years prior to 2008.

But now there's an increase in end strength. And the question would be, should the end strength -- should manpower be increased or should there be more emphasis on modernization?

And if each of you could answer that?

FERGUSON:

Representative Wilson, the challenge at all the services face, and the Navy in particular, is we have to balance the capitalization and replacement of equipment with operations and maintenance costs and depot maintenance, as well as repairs to existing, as well as the people accounts.

And so when we looked at our end strength about six or eight months ago, we assessed that, due to the increased demands that were placed on us for the joint force for enablers, that we decided to flatten out our (inaudible) and to stabilize.

And we assessed that approximately 329,000 or so, in the foreseeable future, will provide us that adequate support where we can meet the joint force requirements and the operational force.

NEWTON:

And sir, also, in the United States Air Force, it's a balanced approach. We have -- as we put forth in our proposed end strength of 330,000, the issue is not so much the end strength -- that's important enough -- but also, how we're going to shape that force, and to

compel that force to do what in support of the joint war-fighter.

We've put our priorities, in terms of providing intelligence and surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, as we reinvigorate the nuclear enterprise toward irregular warfare, toward bringing back some more of our maintenance, particularly on our flight lines and so forth.

And so, as we look toward this end strength, it's also how we're going to shape that force, again, over not only for the current fight, but for future fights as well.

And so it is indeed a balanced approach.

WILSON:

And thank you all.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Mr. Kline?

KLINE:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today, for your testimony, for answering the questions, and for your terrific service to our nation.

We have -- I want to explore, for my brief time here, the issue of access of recruiters to colleges and to high schools. I have couple of comments and then a question.

The laws are different, a little bit, regarding college and high school, so my first question would be, what is your perception -- and it can be any of you -- we're, sort of, limited to time -- maybe Dr. Gilroy or perhaps, General Coleman or General Rochelle could address it -- how is access to the colleges working out today?

Is it restricting our ability, particularly, to recruit highly- qualified individuals for the officer corps, for example?

And then, a more pressing concern is access to students in high school.

As you know, there's some debate here in Congress and there are some proposals out there that would restrict access of recruiters to information and recruiters would only be provided student information when parents give their written consent.

The point is, there are proposals out there. There are some different views. I'd be interested in knowing what your perception is of how it's working now, as far as access, and what changes in the law, such as I've just suggested, what that might do?

And I'll yield to whoever would like to answer that question.

GILROY:

Congressman Kline, I will begin and then yield to my colleagues as they choose.

With regard to the college climate first, as governed by the Solomon Amendment, clearly, there have been some cases in which access has been hindered, to some extent, or made more difficult than we would like.

But typically, what happens is that, through diplomatic discussions between the services and OSE, and the university or college, those differences seem to be eventually straightened out.

So we're pleased about that. There is a mechanism in place which governs the discussions between the university leadership and the services and OSD. As you know, Solomon provides for the violators of that law, or amendment, to become ineligible to federal funds.

We have two universities that fit that category today. They have not, in the past, received federal funds, so it probably doesn't matter a whole lot to them. But, nonetheless, we forced the law when it is appropriate to do so.

With respect to access to high schools, again, we have a mechanism in place under the Hutchinson Amendment. And we have protection under the No Child Left Behind Act, which provides us access.

Now, all high schools, 22,000 of them, roughly, in number, are technically in compliance with that. But some go to lengths to limit access.

Some teachers and guidance counselors will hand out opt-out forms to students and request them to fill them out before leaving class, for example. Or some will encourage

anti-military groups to set up booths alongside recruiters.

These, as I should categorize, are annoyances, to be sure. But typically, we can work with the schools, the school districts, the superintendents, and even the school boards sometimes, to iron out some of these differences.

We think that the current law, opt-out, is very, very important to maintain. We would be very much opposed to any change which would yield to the so-called opt-in arrangement. So that is particularly important to us.

KLINE:

I'm about to run out of time here. Any of the rest of you have anything different or modification to that?

The concern would be, in the opt-in, that you might lose access to a great many students and really have an adverse impact on recruiters. Is that widely-held view there?

You can nod or -- OK.

(UNKNOWN)

That's certainly my impression, sir, yes.

KLINE:

OK. Thanks very much.

Madam Chair, I yield back.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Mr. Loeb sack?

LOEBSACK:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to all of you for your service.

I just have a question about dwell time, and I'd like to get your thoughts on that -- all of you, but in particular, if I could begin with General Coleman and General Rochelle.

Obviously, over the course of the past several years, that's been a very important issue. A lot of thoughts, a lot of ideas, some legislation proposed to increase well time because of the obviously, the concern for retention of servicemembers who are on multiple deployments.

Generals Coleman and Rochelle, could you speak to that issue and what you see, perhaps, coming down the pike, as far as any increased dwell time for active members, not to mention our Reserve and Guard as well?

COLEMAN:

Yes, sir. Thank you for the question, sir.

Sir, speaking for the Marine Corps, the dwell time is not yet where we would like it to be. That was part of the Commandant's call to increase the size of the Marine Corps, so that we could, in fact, right-size and do the dwell, so that we could have a one to two -- for every month in the fight, another month home.

We're not yet there, sir. We are getting closer. As we grow to 202,000, we believe, by the end of this year, we will have increased our numbers by three battalions worth of infantry battalions, which would certainly make a difference.

But the point to remember is that when we in what we believe in July get to 202,000, some number of those Marines are at Parris Island. It takes about a year from a time a recruit gets to Parris Island to the time he or she gets to the fight. So relief is on the way, but we're not there yet, sir.

ROCHELLE:

Representative Loeb sack, let me, first of all, say that I would not see the need for legislation with respect to dwell time, which was embedded in your question. The chief of staff of the Army and the secretary of the Army have committed to balancing the Army,

restoring balance to the Army no later than 2011.

What does balance mean? What is means, basically, is two years dwell for every year deployed for the active component, four years dwell for every year deployed for our reserve components.

We are committed to that. Fundamental to achieving that is the growth of the Army. and I mean that in two senses -- in two, different terms.

The first, of course, is the growth of the end strength, which has been spoken of already. But the other is the growth in capability and units able to answer the (inaudible) and the call for our nation.

LOEBSACK:

Admiral Ferguson and General Newton, could you speak to that issue, too?

FERGUSON:

For the Navy, the average dwell time in the units is in excess of 2-1. And we very closely monitor those units that are under stress.

For example, we have some squadrons of the A-6B aircraft that are approaching 1-1. but in no cases, do we exceed 1-1 without the CNO's specific approval. And we also monitor the time in home port. So we feel we have very good controls of the issue.

NEWTON:

The Air Force would echo that. We're on much of an expeditionary footing in terms of being able to provide, again, airmen to the joint fight may require.

So it may be on an individual basis, a joint expeditionary tasking, but also to unit. But at this time, we're not -- we don't either involve with, nor do we foresee a challenge there or issue with dwell time.

LOEBSACK:

Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Mr. Jones?

JONES.:

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

And to the panel, thank you very much for being here today. Thank you for your service.

And Dr. Gilroy, my question does, I think, impact on recruiting especially. What are the number of military with PTSD?

GILROY:

I'm sorry? I'm sorry, sir?

JONES:

What is the number of our troops, primarily, I guess, Marine Corps and Army, that have been verified by a doctor, whether it be Army or Navy, that have a mental issue called PTSD?

GILROY:

Yes. I don't have those numbers with me. And I would like to take that back for the record...

JONES:

OK.



GILROY:

... and respond in full and accurate.

JONES:

That is fair. And again, the reason I'm bringing it up, because I do think it impacts on recruiting.

The number that I have received is 42,000. That came from the Department of the Defense. I think -- and I want to bring this up before the committee as well as the panel -- we've got some real serious issues with the policy that relates to those coming back from Afghanistan or Iraq that have been designated with the mental challenge known as PTSD.

And many of my colleagues, I'm sure, as I have, have been made aware of young men who are going into the military. And I actually read this letter on the floor of the House recently. I did not use the name of the mother or the young Marine.

But going into the Marine Corps at 18, good student, Eagle Scout. His grandfather was a Marine that fought in Vietnam. The kid had been to Iraq and Afghanistan a total of three times, both countries.

He comes back, develops a problem of alcohol abuse. Navy doctors -- I have their report -- recommend that he have counseling. Somewhere along the line, the ball was dropped -- and actually, General Rochelle, working with a young lady from my district down in Georgia who's in the Army, very similar situation.

I think that somewhere along the way -- and I'm not sure that Dr. Gilroy, it's your responsibility -- but somewhere along the way, the military's got to come together on this issue of PTSD.

Because Joe Stiglitz, who wrote the book, "The \$3 Trillion War," has already said that the tsunami that's coming -- and I do think this does impact on recruiting quite frankly -- because, if this mom is writing a congressman -- the only reason I'm involved is because he's stationed out in Camp Lejeune.

But this word gets out that the military wants you, but once you cannot do your job because of a mental wound, then they don't need you.

We've got to deal with this. And again, I'm not sure this is your area of responsibility,

but this is a problem that I think is going to impact, at some point in time, if we continue to build up in Afghanistan -- and I'm not discussing that policy today -- but if we do, and we still have somewhat of a presence for the next 19 months, or 24 months in Afghanistan, there's still going to be fighting, we're going to see more and more of these people, young people coming back that have some type of mental challenge and some type of PTSD.

And I hope that you will and this fine panel sitting here today, will say that we need to review our policies because there's no reason to say to someone that's got PTSD, you're going -- we're going to discharge you for a dishonorable discharge or misconduct, and therefore, you lose your benefits. And that's not helping society.

GILROY:

No, you're absolutely right, Congressman Jones. That is a serious issue and one that I know my colleagues at the table have dealt with specifically.

We take this extremely seriously. There's just no question about it. The impact that you imply on recruiting is clearly there, too, because these young men and women who return as veterans, having served in theater, become ambassadors for us when they return to the community.

So it is extremely important that we make sure that they are receiving all of the benefits to which they are entitled. So I will take that back with me with all earnest and with the greatest amount of seriousness.

Thank you.

JONES:

Madam Chair, I'll end on this.

But, Dr. Gilroy, I really would like to have a discussion with you at some point in the future. Maybe you could do this situation to the right people and say we don't need to wait any longer on this. Because it is going to grow and it's going to expand. It's going to create more problems for this country, but also recruiting.

I yield back.

DAVIS:

Thank you, Mr. Jones.

I want to return to the issue, I think, that you've touched on a little bit, the fact that we've been able to reach our numbers in terms of end strength and early, but the second part of that is really to have the dollars available to do the training.

I'd like you to speak to that and whether you feel that there is adequate capacity there to do that, or are there slots available and training schools?

We know that, in some cases, Reserves do not have the ability to also participate in those training arenas. And so I'd like you to -- where are the problems here that we're encountering?

And how concerned are we to be about that?

ROCHELLE:

Madam Chair, you've actually addressed, or asked two or three questions in that single one, the first being resourcing.

There is always tension between investment accounts, modernization, if you will, people, and then, of course, operational tempo. And the Army balances that within its authorized topline, in order to do, as I said before, deploy the best-trained, the best-equipped, and the best-led forces our nation can deploy. That's our mantra, when we will do that.

Your question also addresses reserve components. And I'd simply like to point out that, at the beginning of 2009, the backlog for National Guard -- I'll mention National Guard. The Army Reserve does not have appreciable backlog -- was 28,900 thousand soldiers who had yet to enter training to become a full-up-round as we would say.

The Army added 8,300 seats to the National Guard's allocation of training seats, ostensibly reducing that backlog, by the end of 2009, to no greater than 9,600.

So it's a total-force approach that we are taking.

DAVIS:

Where do you anticipate, though, the problems?

Because part of difficulty is still -- there is -- stop-loss is still an issue within the Army.

ROCHELLE:

Stop Loss is still an issue for the Army. And we are actively...

DAVIS:

Could you quantify that for us a little bit better in terms of those numbers and how that interfaces with the issue that we're talking about?

ROCHELLE:

Seven-thousand stop-loss today in the active component -- bear with me one second -- 7,000 in the active Army, 1,400 in the Army Reserve, and 4,400 in the Army National Guard.

And we are committed and we are actively working, at the senior levels of the Army, to work our way out of stop-loss.

In the past, what I've been asked by this committee and others is, General Rochelle, is 547, 400 enough?

And my answer has always been, let us get there and then we'll see, because we don't know what demand will look like.

Well, as Representative Wilson mentioned in his opening statement, we are there. What remains the unknown today is the demand.

DAVIS:

(OFF-MIKE)

When can you anticipate that you think we will have fewer troops who are needed to fill in, essentially, some of those slots?

Can you project that us a little bit?

ROCHELLE:

I'm not sure I understand your question, please.

DAVIS:

Do you have your own timeline when you would like to see us having far fewer troops that are part of stop-loss that are in units that are being pulled out essentially that are leveling and filling in those units. When -- is there a time that we can anticipate that?

Or where should we be?

What would be the anticipated numbers, even after we're able to have the end strength and the training following through in the kinds of number that we'd like to see?

ROCHELLE:

Relative to the demand, I would submit that we are doing a near miraculous job of keeping stop-loss to the low levels that it is.

Now, any number of stop-loss is an egregious number. What we are really given the demand that's on the army today, we're doing in my estimation, my humble estimation, a remarkable job of keeping it to the minimum number possible.

To your specific question, going forward, it depends upon the demand. And I can only say that, since my time as the Army G-1, every estimate of declining demand has proven false.

DAVIS:

I appreciate that.

Mr. Wilson?

WILSON:

Again, I just thank all of you for your hard in providing opportunity for the young people of our country. And I look forward to the next panel, which are our Reserve units.

But thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Mr. Loeb sack?

LOEBSACK:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd just like to draw the obvious connection between my question and my good friend Walter Jones' -- Congressman Jones' question.

I mean, clearly, there seems to me there's an intimate link between dwell time or the lack thereof, and issues of PTSD, the strain on the family. And you're all very aware of that obviously.

And, you know, I'm really appreciative of the fact that Congressman Jones asked the question he did after I asked. We didn't coordinate it, but I'm really glad that he did that. We all have, I think, very similar concerns on this panel.

I have another question, a bit more controversial perhaps.

The end strength levels that we're talking about, the goals that we're talking about, were established prior to the SOFA Agreement in Iraq -- if I remember correctly prior to what appears now to be a serious drawdown of our troops in Iraq, again, fully aware that there will be other conflicts that we're going to ramp up some, in all likelihood, in Afghanistan, although that still remains to be seen just how much because the administration is conducting a strategic review of the situation there.

Do any of you foresee any modifications of the kinds of end- strength numbers that we're now assuming we're going to need in the coming few years or so, based on any potential, strategic review of the situation around the world?

Or are you just assuming that we're going to continue to work along the lines that you're now working?

Any thoughts on that from any of you?

COLEMAN:

Sir, for the Marine Corps, I believe that the 202,000 is about right. When General Conway came in, his desire, as I said before, the right size of force was to ensure that we had the 1-2 dwell.

But, since this long war, the Marine Corps, as a service, has been able to fight the war and train for the war. But we've not done jungle training. We've not done cold-weather training. And we've not done fire exercises. We've only had the number of folks to fight, to come home, refit, and go back.

The 202,000 is to give us three, mirror-image Marine expeditionary forces so that we can do jungle training and cold weather training, do the things that we haven't done.

So, until we know what's next, I would say that yes, the 202,000, we believe, 202,000 is correct. And I'd be surprised if we went higher, requested higher or lower in the three to five-year terms, sir. That's just General Coleman.

LOEBSACK:

Right. General Rochelle?

ROCHELLE:

Sir, you're asking a strategic risk question. And my first response to it would be I'm optimistic that the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review will take that into account.

LOEBSACK:

Right.

ROCHELLE:

And then, of course, make recommendations with respect to service size is for all of us...

LOEBSACK:

Right.

ROCHELLE:

... that are prudent.

You're also asking a question in more tactical sense, as you say, deliberations. And my answer would be, except for ongoing discussions on the subject of stop-loss and how the Army might come out of stop- loss, know there's nothing beyond 547,400.

LOEBSACK:

OK.

FERGUSON:

For the Navy, we continuously review our end strength in terms of requirements. And it's an issue of balancing fleet manning of the ships and the support personnel needed to operate the force combined with our contribution to joint enablers.

And so, we within that calculation assume the level of a risk, as General Rochelle referred to, that we assess in those manning levels, and that the nature of our demand is support personnel in theater, we see that demand continuing. And so, we feel comfortable with the levels that we proposed for the foreseeable future.

LOEBSACK:

Thank you. General?

NEWTON:



From an Air Force standpoint, much like -- as Admiral Ferguson just (inaudible) it's a bounce approach. Again, you cannot predict the future, and certainly, the enemy gets a vote in that regard.

But as we look across our strength, as I mentioned in our proposed end strength of 330,000 from an Active duty sense, we in the United States Air Force, also take a total force approach as well in terms of being in very synchronized and integrated with our Active duty, our Guard, and our Reserve.

That said, again, what you need your United States Air Force to be engaged with is from, sure, in Operation Iraqi Freedom and during Freedom, particularly on irregular warfare, but also across the spectrum of conflict as well. And so we are again focused on that balanced approach to how we not only look at our end strength but again, how we shape that force inside those end-strength numbers.

LOEBSACK:

Thanks to all of you. I appreciate that.

Dr. Gilroy?

GILROY:

In summation, General Rochelle mentioned the forthcoming Quadrennial Defense Review. And we await that document, clearly, under the new administration, which will indicate to us the planning that it has for contingencies. And it will provide alternative scenarios so that we -- we go with what we know right now as the current planning and await that document.

LOEBSACK:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Mr. Jones?

JONES:

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

General Rochelle, I believe your answer to Madam Chairman Davis about the stop-loss, would you repeat the numbers?

I think you said 7,000. I was a little bit late in listening to your response of 1,400, I believe you said on Reserve and 4,400 National Guard. Is that right?

ROCHELLE:

Those are the correct numbers, sir.

JONES:

OK. I will never forget going to Walter Reed years ago with Jane Taylor (ph), I believe, and a kid from Florida was in the hospital. And he was very, very -- he was a sergeant in the Army. And as we got ready to leave, we talked to him. We thanked him.

And he had his finance sitting at the end of the bed. And he asked us about stop-loss. He said, who has this authority? Is it the Congress or is it the Department of Defense?

And one of us said, well, the Department of Defense has this authority.

Then he pulled the sheets down, and both legs had been blown off. He was in the sixth week or seventh week of being stop-loss.

It's always bothered me and I don't know why I didn't think of it, and I thank the Chairwoman for doing it. How is that soldier notified that he's going to be extended? How does that process work?

Are they told two months out, three months out?

Is it an orderly process? Or are they told within three weeks we decided that you're not going to be going home?

How does that mechanically work?

ROCHELLE:

Stop-loss goes into effect for a unit that is -- that has been alerted to deploy, whether it's a Guard unit, a Reserve unit, or an active component unit, in effect, 90 days prior to the latest arrival date for the unit?

Now, that doesn't mean that on that date, every soldier in that second brigade combat team is effectively stop-loss. What it means is, as that brigade deploys or as that unit deploys, the members of that unit who arrive at their expiration term of service throughout the 12-month or 15-month deployment, will effectively go into the condition we refer to as stop-loss.

You posed a question in your -- the point of the authority. And the authority is inherent and clearly stated in the enlistment contract that it is the authority of the federal government of the national command authority to employ stop-loss.

JONES:

General, do you -- this might not be fair, but this has become a very, very -- it's become a national issue of great concern to many people.

And I realize contracts -- and maybe the majority of people that read the contracts, they read them -- you know, I haven't read as many insurance policies as I should, and I sign the dotted line. But that's my problem, not anybody else's.

But I guess the point I'm trying to get to is that maybe the Congress and maybe most of my colleagues wouldn't agree, but maybe we ought to be -- have some law or something that says that if the DOD is going to have the authority, that they would have to come to an Armed Services Committee and say that our situation with our ranks are so desperate, that we're going to have to institute the policy of stop-loss.

I think that would give more confidence to the American people than an administration -- I'm not being critical of the previous and the new one hasn't been there for six weeks, so I can't be too critical.

Anyway, but the fact is that when this policy went in place a few years ago, it was almost like the soldier -- and I guess the Marines as well -- but the soldier primarily was somewhat caught off guard. Yes, it's in the contract, but the contract, they either forgot it or they didn't read it.

I think on that kind of issue, that if America's going send their kids to die and be wounded, that the Congress ought to be more involved. I'm not saying that the Congress, but if the DOD sector that came in here and said to an Armed Services Committee, listen, we're in a dire situation. We've got to put a stop-loss program in place, I think the Congress would give that authority.

But the way that this had worked and this was in Iraq especially, I think truthfully, it really caught a lot of families way off guard. And I don't expect you to make a decision that the Congress should be involved or not.

But I think the Congress itself ought to look into this and really discuss what is our role, what is the role of the Department of Defense?

Because what it is, is a draft, anyway, or an extension of somebody's service. And maybe they should have known it, but many times they forgot it or didn't know it.

I yield back.

Do you want to answer, anybody, or let it go?

ROCHELLE:

Sir, I'd like to comment, if I may.

JONES:

OK.

ROCHELLE:

First of all, I'd like to reiterate that we are committed as soon as demand permits to get the Army out of stop-loss.

From a personal perspective, I'd like to you to know that just a few short years ago, to the point of recruiting, an impact on recruiting, indirect impact.

Just a few, short years ago, I had the privilege of leading the Army's recruiting force for almost four years, starting roughly 100 days after September the 11th. I can tell you that, every time the Army re-employed, tightened, tinkered with -- that's a technical term --

stop-loss, I felt it in recruiting.

We don't like it. We would be off it today if the demand permitted. So it simply doesn't. And it is a technical provision of the enlistment contract that applies to all of us. We all sign the same enlistment contract, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Army Reserve, and National Guard.

To our soldiers, I would say, and I'm always cognizant that they too are watching these hearings and these proceedings, we will get off stop-loss as quickly as we possibly can. We are committed to that.

JONES:

Thank you, sir.

(UNKNOWN)

Congressman Jones, let me add something from the Office of Secretary of Defense perspective and to support General Rochelle in his views about ending stop-loss as soon as practically possible.

Secretary Gates has gone on record as being committed to ending stop-loss as well. And of course, he has been in serious discussion with the Army leadership, including General Rochelle within the last, two weeks on specific, proposed dates for both the active Army, the Reserve, and the Guard about when it would be practically reasonable to expect the elimination of stop-loss.

There is great commitment within the DOD leadership as well as the Army to end this. And we're very cognizant of the political ramifications to this policy as well, of course, as the military ramifications for keeping it.

The secretary is also committed to the payment, given new authorities for the payment to those who are engaged in stop-loss. So there is a lot of discussion ongoing at the present time and I expect within several weeks, we will have some official notification of the Department's plans for stop-loss.

JONES:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

DAVIS:

Thank you. You can tell there's great concern on the committee on that issue.

I know that we have our next panel and we want to move to that. But before I do that quickly, and I also said that I would give you a chance to make sure that you leave us with a message or a thought, a concern as we wrap up.

As we will be looking forward to fiscal year 2010 budget, we know that it does not, today as I understand it, represent the enhanced 0.5 pay for the military above the ECI, above the employment consumer index.

I wonder whether you have -- how do you see that? Do you think that's going to be a concern in terms of recruiting?

What would you like us to know about that issue?

GILROY:

I think that the 2.9 percent pay raise, which is equivalent to the employment cost index as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is appropriate and fair for this fiscal year. We would not, as a department, ask for the ECI plus one-half.

The reason being is not for budgetary purposes, but simply because the 2.9 percent keeps us at the 70th percentile of civilian earnings, which the 9th Quadrennial Review of military compensation established as the reasonable and appropriate earnings profile for military members, commensurate with the earnings profile of civilians with the appropriate education and experience.

So we are happy with the 2.9 percent, would not think it necessary to go anything above that.

(UNKNOWN)

I would...

DAVIS:

It's a departure from where we've been and so I think that will get everybody's attention.

GILROY:

I understand that.

(UNKNOWN)

I'll respond to your secondary question, which is impact on recruiting. I would predict none.

(UNKNOWN)

I echo that, ma'am.

(UNKNOWN)

I would also assess the minimal impact on recruit.

(UNKNOWN)

Agree.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

The other issue and I know we've talked about it before, is just your ability to recruit within medical profession. And you sat taking care of through bonuses that you're able to offer. And do you believe that there are other issues that would impact that. And I'm curious -- but I think I don't want to ask you now because we want to move on -- is what solutions do you have? Where, in fact, that opportunity for recruiting medical professionals is a very difficult one given the situation today?

Anything we should know about quickly?

(UNKNOWN)

I would like to give you a very quick response.

There is a critical shortage of medical professionals across our nation. I'm reminded of the book, "Will the Last Physician Please Turn Out the Light?" (sic) The authorities given the Army -- the services, I should say -- the authorities given the services to use innovative approaches, especially those innovative approaches that allow us to offer things that are a little bit exotic, to medical professionals is very, very critical. And I would simply add that those expire at the end of '09.

DAVIS:

Thank you. And I know throughout the professional services, that is an issue.

Is there anything you wanted to add quickly to the testimony this morning that we will want to know more about?

COLEMAN:

Yes, ma'am. I would, if that's OK.

Ma'am, the Commandant's greatest challenge is to fight and win the war. And his second priority is to take care of his families. And I would like to personally thank you and the other members of Congress for what you have done to ensure that we're able to take care of our families.

And it has been absolutely phenomenal the way that the response has come in to take (inaudible) of our families.

And secondly, on a personal note, last year, you and Congressman Kline spoke to me about casualty reporting. And I think the Marine Corps had it (inaudible), and I think on behalf of the families, thank you for jabbing your finger in my chest.

ROCHELLE:

I would not like to miss this opportunity on behalf of the 1.1 million men and women who serve in the United States Army and their families to thank this committee for its



magnificent support.

(UNKNOWN)

I, too, share the General's view of thanking this committee for unfaltering support over the years from both sides of the aisle. It's absolutely critical that we have that support. And you have never, ever let us down.

As a closing thought, however, let me end where I began. To the extent that there are pressures for budgetary cuts in the light of our recruiting and retention success, our recent success, let us go about them judiciously, carefully, slowly, and base them on empirical evidence. Thank you for your support.

FERGUSON:

I would also like to echo the support from the Navy for the committee and the Congress. I'm personally in awe of the performance of our sailors around the globe. They are the finest Navy I've seen in my career in 30 years.

We must continue to make investments in the critical skills that we require in a very high-tech and demanding Navy, such as in nuclear power, such as in medical and dental as you mentioned, our SEALs and our Special Operators that are at the tip of the spear in this was that we're engaged in. And we'll continue to do that and ask for your support in that.

In the upcoming budget, as you mentioned, we will take a balanced approach in looking at our investment accounts, our readiness and maintenance, as well as its personnel.

And then lastly, you'll hear my counterpart, Dirk Debbink, in the next panel. We're driving to a seamless total force in the Navy. And we could not achieve a lot of the missions we do without our Reserve component. And I'd just like to thank them for all they do for the Navy.

NEWTON:

And in closing, thank you also, on behalf of the United States Air Force. Our topic today has been recruiting and retention and end strengths and so forth. And this is, I believe what you've heard from my colleagues here, it's a balanced approach. It's a balanced approach that's clearly integrated, not only from the services, but speaking for the United States Air Force, integrated the total force approach as well.

As we make those contributions to the joint fight, we've got to be balanced in our approach to not only today's fight in our contributions to the joint and coalition warfare, but also how we prepare for the future. Those unknowns out there really I think behooves all of us in this room, to make sure that we focus on that joint contribution.

The last point is, it's not just our men and women in uniform and civilians, but our family members as well. Now, that balanced approach you'll see from the United States Air Force, and I'm sure speaking for my colleagues here, it is a balance. I'm challenged by that, not only focusing on those who's volunteered to serve our country, but their loved ones, their family members who are serving alongside them. We need to pay the same amount of attention and put the same priorities in their service as well.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

I want to thank you all, particularly your focus on families.

We'll have a hearing on family support as well. We will have families we want to be here and testify. WE know that there are some remarkable programs around the country where people have really taken on the delivery of services to families in a way that I think values them greatly, and we want to look at some of those programs as well.

But thank you so much. We appreciate your work, and certainly, the extraordinary service of the men and women of our country.

Thank you very much. And I look forward to the next panel.

(RECESS)

DAVIS:

I want to invite our panel to please take your seats. We're delighted to have you with us.

Thank you very much for being here. I want to introduce our next panel and you might have, as you were listening in, I think we did a good job at keeping within three to four minutes at the (inaudible) and that's very helpful to us. If you can continue that, that would be great. And we will go back and ask you at the end if there anything that you -- message that you really want to leave us with.

We're not looking for thanks, actually. What we're looking for is just to be sure that we have an opportunity to focus on an issue that perhaps didn't come up in the course of discussion.

I want to introduce -- now, Lieutenant General Clyde Vaughn, Director of Army National Guard; Lieutenant General Jack Stultz, the Chief of the U.S. Army Reserve and Commanding General for the U.S. Army Reserve Command; Vice Admiral Dirk J. Debbink, the Chief of Navy Reserve; Lieutenant General John Bergman, Commander of Marine Forces Reserve; and Lieutenant General Harry Wyatt, Director, Air National Guard; Lieutenant General Charles E. Stenner, Jr., Chief, U.S. Air Force Reserve; and Rear Admiral Daniel May, Chief, Coast Guard Reserve Forces. Thank you all for being here.

Please proceed, General Vaughn.

VAUGHN:

Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Wilson, distinguished members of the subcommittee, Mike Rochelle, my buddy, just talked about the 1.1 million members of this great Army.

I want to introduce one person. Behind me is the outstanding non-commissioned officer of the year for the entire 1.1 million soldier Army and it is a National Guardsman from the state of Montana, Staff Sergeant Michael Noyce Merino.

(APPLAUSE)

DAVIS:

General, I just heard, perhaps you're going to be leaving in about 60 days, is that correct.

VAUGHN:

I hope so, if I get the right support from everyone.

DAVIS:

Well, we wish you well. We thank you for your tremendous service.

VAUGHN:

It's been a privilege to serve as the Director, and it's really been an honor to come over here and testify. I assure you that we talked to all of our youngsters about what a great privilege it is to sit here and take these questions from you and to help shape this force.

Along that same vein, today, we find ourselves at 367,000 soldiers in the Army National Guard, significantly over strength. It's a far cry from the 2005 year that we all remember when we were 20,000 soldiers under strength and you all had so much to do with that.

The pieces that I would talk to today as we go forward is the fact that we're going to continue to reshape our Guard in terms of capability as we bring our end strength down to the authorized numbers. We are on track to try to do that.

This is a new era for us. We've never been in this position with this kind of strength. This is the strongest Army Guard we've ever had. We've never found ourselves over strength like this. And we're in a position that we can actually at the same time, trying to get to authorized levels, grow the readiness of our force. And we're going to take that challenge on. So thank you very much.

I will shorten the rest of it. And I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

DAVIS:

General Stultz, please?

STULTZ:

Madam Chairwoman, Congressman Wilson, and others, thank you for the opportunity to come and speak to you today. And I'm honored to represent over 202,000 Army Reserve soldiers. And just as my friend, Clyde Vaughn has said, I echo the comments that he's made.

The growth in our force has been tremendous. When I took over as Chief of the Army Reserve back in 2006, we were at about 186,000. Today, we're over 202,000. That's a growth of 16,000 in a little under three years. So tremendous success in our recruiting retention, which is a byproduct of the support we've gotten from Congress. The incentives

we've been able to pay our soldiers to recruit and to retain them.

But more importantly, it's 16,000 growth of the right type of soldiers. It's the quality of the force that I'm in awe of today in the Army Reserve, great men and women who leave their jobs, leave families, and volunteer to go and risk their lives.

And just as, most recently, when I was visiting soldiers over Christmas in Iraq and talking to a young E4 from Maryland, asked him what he does back home, and he says, I'm finishing my degree. And I said, "What are you majoring in?"

He goes, "I'm getting a doctorate in physics."

That's what we've got out there. It's the right 16,000 that we've drawn, and we're well on our way to meeting our end strength of 205, 206,00 by the end of this fiscal year.

So I'm proud to represent those soldiers and look forward to your questions.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Admiral Debbink?

DEBBINK:

To speak to you, I turn the mike on. It'd be helpful. Here we go.

This is my first appearance before Congress. And I want to begin by thanking you for your fantastic support for the 67,000 Navy Reservists, and importantly, their families that I represent.

There'd be three things that I'd like to try to communicate with you today. And first and foremost, in my written testimony, I go into quite some length as to what we are doing today for our Navy and by extension, our nation.

As I testify this morning, Naval Reserve sailors are operating, as you know, in every corner of the world. And you see our sailors in the news but you don't see the moniker, "Reserve," down at the bottom because as Admiral Ferguson testified just previous to this, we are a fully integrated force, and utilize a total force concept of operations.

From helping to certify our strike groups, as they deploy from home base to our Navy SEALs that are (inaudible) integrated with the teams in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world, we are making significant contributions across the full spectrum of Naval and joint operations.

We are also linked closely with our active component and the civilians that make up our Navy. And we are constituting a total force to execute our maritime strategy and national tasking.

The second thing I want to tell you about is just the outstanding sailors who are doing the work of our Navy Reserve and provide a quick assessment on our recruiting, retention, and end strength. The Navy Reserve has seen end strength fall nearly 25 percent since 2003.

Our executing end strength, right now, of just under 67,000 by the end of this fiscal year. Improved retention, lower attrition, and successful recruiting has left us in the position of enacting force- shaping measure in order to maintain specific skill sets and experience that satisfy our total force demand.

Central to our manpower strategy is the establishment of a true continuum of service culture. We believe this will offer our sailors the opportunity to be truly a sailor for life, not matter what life brings at you, that they'll be able to flow back and forth between the active component and the reserve component, satisfying their personal needs, their family needs, while at the same time, allowing us to make sure we maintain the proper skill sets in our own reserve, in our total Navy force.

Finally, a bridge quick from what we are doing and who's doing it, to what I believe is the real value proposition of our Navy Reserve. We are proud of what we bring to the fight today. We're also acutely aware that we have a long-term commitment to the Navy and our nation, and we're trying to demonstrate daily the credible return on investment that the Navy Reserve represents.

We've proven ourselves to be a ready, responsive, and adaptive operational force while maintaining the strategic depth. This is an important and I believe a very meaningful time for us all to be serving in our nation's defense and especially, as a reservist.

I thank you for your continued support, demonstrated commitment to our Navy Reserve and our navy. And I look forward to your questions.

Thank you very much.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

General Bergman?

BERGMAN:

Good morning, Chairwoman Davis, Congressman Wilson, distinguished members of the panel, the committee, thank you, thank you on behalf of the roughly 100,000 Marines of Marines Forces Reserve, their families, and equally important, their employers across the country.

The fact of the matter is, for the last, two years, the Marine Corps Reserve has not made their end-strength numbers. I'd like to put three footnotes on that statement if you will allow me to.

First, as you've heard General Coleman say, in an effort to build an active component in the Marine Corps to 202,000, we have participated in that as the Marine Corps Reserve roughly about 1,950 Reserve Marines that have real affiliated with the active components. That's number one.

Number two, during the past three years, we have (inaudible) approximately six units of 4th Marine aircraft wing to support the aviation transition plan to the V-22 joint strike fighter, Yankee and Zulu Cobras, both with people and airplanes. That equated to about 600 still uninvested billets that will be invested within the next 12 to 18 months, in other words, 600 more folks in the units.

And third, I think you would all agree there's nothing more adaptable than the Marine in the fight. And that's true today. What lags sometimes is the policies that support that Marine in the fight. The Operational Reserve is now a reality. About 80-plus percent of the Marine Corps Reserve paychecks are in Operational Reserve.

We are now just beginning to catch up, as General Coleman referred to, focusing on Marine Corps end-strength issues with the policy that will allow us to man, equip, train, and more importantly, fund.

I have a copy of this fourth generation model slide I would like to leave all of you with at the end of this. Because this talks about most importantly, the five-year dwell time that will allow us to manage our force, train our force, and be predictable for those Marines, their families, and employers over six-year cycle.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

General Wyatt?

WYATT:

Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Wilson, distinguished members of the subcommittee, and staff, it is my honor and privilege to testify on behalf of the 106,700 members of the Air National Guard.

Actually, our strength right now is approaching 109,000. We've had a very good recruiting year.

Thanks to the support of Congress, the American people, and the United States Air Force, 106,700 is our authorized strength, airmen deployed forward in support of our United States Air Force and our combatant commanders, but also deployed forward in the 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia as we support our vendors and the president.

It's an honor and privilege to be here today and talk about some people that I'm extremely proud of, members of the Air National Guard.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you for this privilege.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

General Stenner?

STENNER:

Madam Chairwoman, Congressman Wilson, and committee members, fellow



servicemembers, thank you very for the opportunity to be here to address you on these important matters of recruiting, retention, and end strength.

But before I say my remarks, I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce Chief Master Sergeant Troy McIntosh right here who's with me today. Chief McIntosh serves as the Air Force Reserve Command Chief and helps me keep track of the issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale, and progress of the command's outstanding airmen. Thanks for being here today, Chief.

Members of the committee, I am indeed honored to be here today to advocate for the interest of our more than 67,000 citizen airmen. Our airmen have been continuously deployed and globally engaged in combat missions for over 18 straight years. They're not only responding to the asymmetric threats we currently face, but stand ready to respond to conventional threats as they arise.

By any measure, our airmen are performing admirably. The Air Force Reserve is a repository of experience and expertise for the Air Force. We are a mission-ready force, training to the same standards and maintaining the same currencies as those of the regular Air Force.

And we are a cost-effective force comprising nearly 14 percent of the total Air Force authorized end strength for only 5.3 percent of the military personnel budget, or roughly 3.5 Reserve airmen to one regular airman.

Our priorities are clear and they fall within the Air Force priorities overall. We must provide an operational combat-ready force while maintaining a strategic reserve. We must preserve the viability of the triad of relationships reservists must sustain with their families, the Air Force Reserve, and their employers. They must broaden total force initiatives and we must modernize our equipment and facilities.

Each of these priorities is vital to preserving our value and sustaining our forces. As we prepare for the future, we will continue to transform our force to meet the requirements of the Air Force and the joint war fighter.

Over time, we have evolved into an operational reserve but we must not lose sight of the fact that we along with our International Guard brothers and sisters provide a strategic capability as well and must be available in times of national emergencies.

For us to serve as both the strategic reserve and provide operational forces for current and increasing requirements, it is critical that we find the right balance between the two and have sufficient manpower and resources to support those requirements. ` Just as important, is having the right manpower and resources, we must ensure that the right

people with the right skills at the right time to meet Air Force needs are available.

We're evolving our force mix to ease the strain on our stress career fields and to grow into merging mission areas, including the nuclear enterprise, cyberspace, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, unmanned aerial systems, and space, to name a few.

Opportunities still exist to become more efficient and effective. And we'll work as a total force to determine the right balance of mix and mix of regular Guard and Reserve in these new mission areas.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank the members of this committee for the authorization and legislation to provide a readiness and combat capability. We appreciate your unfailing support for the men and women of the Air Force Reserve. And I look forward to working with each of you in the future on the challenges facing the Air Force Reserve, the Air Force, and the nation.

I stand by for any questions you may have.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Admiral May?

MAY:

Good morning, Chairwoman Davis, Congressman Wilson, and distinguished members of the House Armed Service Committee. It is truly a pleasure to have this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Coast Guard Reserve, its contribution to our national defense and homeland security, and the issues that face the men and women of our Coast Guard Reserve.

I'd like to thank the committee for tackling the tough military personnel issues and congratulate you on the legislation that you have done to improve the lives of all of our members. I'd also like to thank the Reserve component Master Chiefs, Reserve component Sergeant Majors, and the Reserve component Chief Master Sergeants that are all with us here today.

As you know, the Coast Guard is one of our five armed forces of the United States. It has a long and distinguished history of service at home as well as abroad. Because of its

mix of military and civil law enforcement authorities, the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to serve as a lead federal agency for maritime homeland security, while also acting as a supporting agency to the Department of Defense.

In fact, over 80 percent of our 8,100 selected Reserve force is directly assigned to Coast Guard shore units where Reservists hone their skills through classroom instruction and on-the-job training side by side with their Active duty counterparts. The remainder of our selective Reserve force is dedicated primarily to supporting our defense operations.

The integration of our active and reserve components enable us to respond quickly when and where operational Reserve forces are needed, aided in part by the authority that is vested in the Secretary of Homeland Security under Title 14 of the U.S. Code. Under Title 14, the secretary may recall Reservists for up to 30 days at a time for domestic contingencies, including natural and manmade disasters and terrorist attacks.

This unique authority helped facilitate a rapid Coast Guard response during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. As one of the armed forces, the Coast Guard also plays a significant role in the homeland security and in our national defense. Reserve components serve as an absolute force multiplier for our entire force.

After the tragic events of September 11th, and in the wake of our largest mobilization of our Coast Guard Reserve since World War II, nearly 50 percent of our force, we have examined all of our systems, including recruiting, training, mobilizing, and demobilizing our Reserves.

We also undertook a recent, comprehensive review of our Coast Guard Reserve that resulted in a policy statement that embodies the three, core, strategic functions of our Coast Guard Reserve, that being maritime homeland security, domestic and expeditionary support to national defense, and domestic or manmade, natural disaster response and recovery.

This policy statement provides a clear focus for our Coast Guard Reserve and will ensure that we continue to have a well-trained, ready force with the right people, the right skills, in the right places to aide in our Coast Guard force for any contingency.

The Coast Guard is our nation's premier maritime law enforcement agency with broad, multi-faceted jurisdictional authority. It is on behalf of our men and women of the Coast Guard that I thank you for your continued support of the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Reserve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

DAVIS:

Thank you very much. Thank you again to all of you.

I want to begin with the question that I asked the earlier panel, whether or not you believe that the budget managers will be looking very suspiciously perhaps at the budgets for recruiting and retention, and whether or not you're going to be able to do the work that needs to be done with lower budget levels.

Could you talk about that and whether you think that, in the end, you might need to lean on emergency supplementals as well to allow you to do the work that's at hand?

Can you manage with...

VAUGHN:

Chairwoman, if I could...

DAVIS:

What I really want to know, really -- how, in fact, you're being approached to deal with this issue?

VAUGHN:

Chairwoman, we were not successful the last couple of years getting everything we needed into the base. I know in the first set of testimony, you heard that we're not crying about it because we worked awfully close within the Army and they've helped us, you know, on this.

Our view is that, if we participate together with the Army solutions, we think if we can get help out of this particular supplemental, then we can lower our bonuses. Probably, we'll have to lower them in order to hit the authorized marks that we've got out there in front of us. But we think it's going to be substantial, but we can't do it alone. We can't do it without any help.

And we have a promise from the Army to help us with this particular situation.

STULTZ:

I would just say that we, in the Army Reserve, during the past year, have migrated a lot of our recruiting and retention incentives into our base. Still, this year, we've had to do some work arounds for additional funds as required.

And I would be very cautious. As people look at the economy and say, well, you don't need all the incentives because the economy is in poor shape, I'm not sure an individual loses their job, goes and joins the Reserve component, as a part-time job. They probably go and look for the Active service for a full-time job.

And in fact, I'm concerned that it could end up having soldiers in the Reserve who lose their civilian job go on active duty and could actually be an attrition factor for us.

I think what we've got to do in the Army Reserve, as we approach our end strength, this year, my focus is really going to be on shaping the force and using those incentives that we've got to get the right capabilities.

You mentioned earlier to the other panel about medical recruiting. We have a large medical force in the Army Reserve. We supply a lot of the medical capability for the armed forces. Those are critical shortages for us also. So we need to reallocate some of the incentives we've got, not reduce them, but reallocate to attract more medical capabilities in our service.

Medical policemen, civil affairs capabilities that call on people that are city managers, or utility directors, or things like that that they can use those same skill sets for us in nation building. So what I'm trying to carry the message of, we've got to maintain the incentives we've got. And within the Army Reserve, let me reshape them to get the capabilities this nation needs.

DAVIS:

Let me just follow up quickly. Do you -- and others might want to respond to -- do you have the flexibility to do that? And are there some new ideas to really tap those individuals that you spoke about?

STULTZ:

Yes, ma'am. Within the Army policy, in a lot of cases, we can and in some cases, realign. Obviously, we do critical skill retention bonuses. And we target certain skill sets with our enlistment bonuses. As we get enough of certain capabilities, we lower the bonuses there and increase bonuses in other areas. So we do have some flexibility.

However, I'll give you a couple of things that we're doing in the Army Reserve. Obviously, we've got the employer partnership program we've started where we're actually -- we're talking to America's industry, for instance, the medical industry of America, and say, what are your shortages?

And where they're short, medical technologists, respiratory, E.R., surgical techs, x-ray techs, we're helping fill their needs by recruiting soldiers, training them and giving them a civilian job.

And so we're putting capability back into America. It's an unique spin on instead of going to America's business and asking for their help to give us soldiers. I'm saying, let me give you employees.

But the other thing I'm doing, I'm working with some medical universities to say, give me scholarships, basically, so I can go and recruit individuals to be doctors or nurses, whatever, and I will give you adjunct faculty, because I've got a lot of wonderful docs in the Army Reserve who are pretty well known throughout the nation and the world, that a lot of these universities would love to have as adjunct faculty.

So if you'll give me some spots in your medical school, in turn, I will give you some adjunct faculty.

We're getting ready to sign an agreement with Pacific University in the Northwest. And we've just signed one with the University of North Carolina for the nursing school

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Let me just go ahead and let the rest of you respond, if you could, quickly, to that.

STENNER:

Madam Chairwoman, I can, very quickly.

As an Air Force Reserve, we ended last year at the lowest point we will be at as a result of the base realignment and closures and the BDT 720 reductions. Right now, we are at the foundation in the floor and growing. And we are going to grow based on a lot of non-prior service folks at PR are not necessarily used to getting.

Now, we have likely all counted on that prior service talent coming to us. So it is not the recruiting dollars. We'll be able to get to folks. It's the second order effect that I'm more concerned about, and that is the subsequent training to get those folks to that level of capability we needed to them to.

So we can get them on board. Now we need to train them.

DAVIS:

Thank you. We'll try to deal with that in another question.

General Bergman?

BERGMAN:

Yes. Very briefly. Going back to my comment about transitioning from the operational -- to the operational from the strategic Reserve, as the manpower planning and policy which allocate the bonus money which we have right now, catch up to where we need it in the Operational Reserve, we will be OK. It's a matter of refocusing that effort within the Marine Corps.

DAVIS:

Admiral Debbink?

DEBBINK:

In the Navy, we believe our funding is adequate. In fact, we are constantly readjusting our selective re-enlistment bonuses as well as other incentives we have to target the fifth that we're looking for. As you know, we're coming down from just over 67,000 to 66,000, so we have, you know, some luxury there perhaps.

But more importantly in the long range view that we have, is we have about 40,000

sailors who leave the active component every year. And we estimate about 17,000 of those would be eligible to join the Navy Reserve or transition in the Navy Reserve. And we need about 9,000 a year.

So our real goal is to target those prior service sailors that are serving now today, and bring them into our reserve component and thereby becoming even more efficient with our funding for pre- retention.

WYATT:

Madam Chairman, on behalf of the Air Guard, our recruiting and retention as far as the baseline, has, in my opinion, not been what it should have been in years past. But we're taking steps to remedy that. We are moving some monies out of the supplemental into the baseline budget.

But we face the same temptations, I think, that all of the individuals at this table face. And that is the threat of the economy and the effect it will have on those recruiting and retention budgets.

We also recognize that the Air Force is growing from 316,000 to 330,000. The Air Force Reserve perhaps will be growing back to levels that it enjoyed prior to some base realignment and closure actions. The demand for the capability is there. And as a member of the total force, the United States Air Force, we need to be poised and ready to accept those admissions as they come our way.

Right now, if you looked at the admissions that we have on behalf of the United States Air Force and our authorizations, we already need 2,228 positions just to do the admissions that we're currently doing for the United States Air Force.

As the Air Force grows, we are poised to grow with them. So now is not the time, in my opinion, to cut the recruiting and retention budgets.

But we do need to get more focused on getting the right airmen in the right place. We need to focus on prior service. We're doing that by tracing the number of our in-service recruiters on active duty Air Force bases with the help and with the consent on not only the United States Air Force, but with the states that are allowing their recruiters to be used in such a fashion.

Thank you.



DAVIS:

Admiral May, did you want to comment?

MAY:

Madam Chairwoman, we don't expect a lot of changes for the Coast Guard. We do our recruiting in our kind of one-stop shop operations all over the country, where recruiters do Active duty and Reserve at the same time. Someone walks into the door, they will talk to them. It may be that the Active duty component will not work for them, however, the Reserve will.

So we don't anticipate a lot of changes there. We've been very fortunate that we've had strong interests in the Coast Guard, especially both Active duty and Reserve. We don't have that many bonuses. The ones that we do are for our expeditionary forces, our port security units. We've had very good response and strength in support for filling those out. And we don't anticipate any changes here in the coming year and our ability to still force those.

DAVIS:

Right. Thank you.

Mr. Wilson?

WILSON:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

And General Vaughn, I want to wish you well on your upcoming retirement. I want to thank you for your service. What a time to depart with extraordinary success in recruiting, retention, end strength. I'm so happy for you. I'm so happy for your recruiters.

As a Guard veteran, a Guard parent, I particularly appreciate your success. And I believe a lot of it relates to working with families. And so getting families involved has had a remarkable success. I know that our Adjutant General Stan Spears, his wife, Dot (ph), have been so encouraging of families.

It should also be noted that for the first time in 10 years, the DOD quality of standards

for new recruits has succeeded all levels. So thank you. What a way to leave office. So congratulations.

In fact, the Army Guard at 267,000 members exceeds the force level of 2013, which was to be 358,200. What should be the strength size?

Do you believe that 358,200? Or should it be higher?

VAUGHN:

Congressman, thank you. Thank you for the comments, first of all.

I think that in giving your experience, you will know that we're in a position for the first time to shape our force in a way that hasn't been done in 50 years. We're all about readiness. We're all about trying to cut down on the amount of cross-leveling which really messes families up and everything that falls out after that.

Now, we had several things to overcome: end strength; the force structure; end-strength deviation. As you heard my buddy, Mike Rochelle, talk about, we needed more training seats so we can get the training pipeline down.

But you know as well as I do, one of the real bad issues we have is that we swear youngsters in at day one; and, many times, these youngsters encumber that slot from maybe as much as a year, you know, before they go to training.

So we're going to institute something that the Army's done for many years, which is the delayed entry program. We will take the youngsters that are at 12, 11, 10, nine, eight months, all the way out and we will not swear them in on Day 1. So this is one of the levers and what we're trying to do is force up the number of soldiers that are basically in our formations.

Now, once we've done that, then we need to approach the next piece which is the over-strength of the TTHS account, just like Mother Army in order to grow the great readiness. And then, the debate will be, what does the strength or the authorized strength of the Guard really need to be? We've pegged that to 371,000 with an additional 12,500 in what we call an RSP.

But again, we have work to do over the next year to two years to figure that out. And then, I predict that Mother Army and whoever succeeds me will come back and they will have that discussion with you because that is the basis for operationalizing the Guard, in my view.

And that's 100 percent trained soldiers near formations, and not folks that aren't ready to go when you call them to go. And we've been in that model and we're just now to the point, after four years at working at this, just now to the point to push that over the goal line.

And so I appreciate the question. And I would like to say that we would like to have another 12,500. I'd like to have done that on my watch. It's not time for that.

We have one more thing that we need to do before we come back, and there are two ways to do it. You either grow the end strength. Or you take down some force structure and that will be a good debate for all us to have.

So thank you very much.

WILSON:

Well, and I've never been prouder of the Guard and know their capabilities.

And, General Stultz, congratulations to you on your building the end strength of the Army Reserve. I also want to commend you with your civil affairs units. They've never been more important working to build local governments in Iraq and Afghanistan. I've seen it firsthand.

A challenge though, for you, is the lack of captains and majors. How is that being addressed?

STULTZ:

Yes, sir.

The challenge we've got, as you mentioned, as we are approaching our 206,000 end strength, we're still short almost 10,000 captains and majors in our force.

Part of that is because the Active Army has placed a lot of incentives to retain captains and majors that normally would have left Active duty, as well as the ROTC programs. They're assessing most of the lieutenants coming out of ROTC onto the Active duty role. So we're just not getting the flow that we used to.

We're addressing that in a number of ways. One is, we're instituting now a three-year

ROTC scholarship. We're pushing the Army to go to a four-year ROTC scholarship. There's some argument, well, does that require legislation or policy?

We'll get to the root of it and we'll figure it out. But we want to be able to offer an individual that wants a civilian career, but is also wants to serve their nation the same four-year scholarship that the Active Army offers them. So we're pushing for more authority there.

Secondly, we're working aggressively to approach the Army, as Dirk mentioned, that continuum of service where we want to talk to officers and NCOs that are thinking about leaving Active service, six, nine, or 12 months before their ETFs to talk to them about transitioning, not getting out, but transitioning into the reserve components and use our employer program to transition them into a civilian career where they can use those skills they've developed in the Active Army in civilian life with a company that is very supportive of the Reserve.

Those two things are very critical to us, because, you know, we talk about direct commissioning. But every time I direct commission an officer out of my ranks, I lose an NCO.

So you know, that's not the answer. I think the answer is also in respect to the civil affairs community and what we're exploring is we direct commission a lot of medical professionals, doctors, a lot of them over 50 years of age who want to join our force, and serve their nation.

What we need to do is go after those other skill sets that our civil affairs forces need, things like bankers, things like city managers, people that are out there that have tremendous civilian skills, and be able to direct commission them as a major or a captain and bring them into the uniformed services.

We're working that very heard right now with the Army to get that authority. And Army G-1, General Rochelle, who was here earlier, is working with us on that.

WILSON:

And if there are any congressional initiatives, I look forward to working with my colleagues on that.

STULTZ:

Sure. Thank you.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Mr. Kline?

KLINE:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, gentlemen, for your years of service and for being here today.

And General Vaughn, let me say it's been a great pleasure working with you these years. And we wish you great success as you move forward.

If your successor is as successful as you've been, then the Army Guard is in great shape for some time to come. So thank you very much.

I couldn't help but notice when the first panel was here that my friend here, Joe Wilson, was bragging about how he's personally responsible for the end strength, the end strength of several services. And I want to thank him and his offspring for doing that. I can't compete with that.

And unfortunately, or fortunately, depends upon which panel I'm talking to, my son and my nieces are all in the active component of the Army. So now my challenge will be to get my niece, as an Army nurse, when she completes her active service to move into the Army Reserve.

But I, like Mr. Wilson, am very proud of the contributions of my son and my family to the armed forces.

They're happy to serve, which is sometimes not understood by many people in America. My son, my nieces are happy to serve. They're proud to serve. And I think that's true of the vast majority of the men and women in uniform today. And that's evidenced by our retention numbers which are, quite frankly, very, very impressive.

And I'm sure that and others have marveled sometimes whether the largest re-enlistment occasions occur in places like Baghdad. These terrific, young men and women want to serve, they're serving, and they're serving well.

I've been interested in the discussion and in both panels, we've talked with issues with dwell time and operational tempo, and personnel tempo, and bonuses, and pay, and all of those things, questions that the chair has asked and other members. I'm just going to throw just a broad question out there. It's a softball or a hardball, dependent upon how you look at it.

When you look at the challenge as coming up this year and next year particularly, 2009, 2010, perhaps in 2011, what is it in view of recruiting and retention only, what is it that is your biggest concern, or what you would, what your biggest wish that you could impart to us, what it is you need to see happen, or what it is that you are desperately afraid might happen that's going to adversely impact.

And I'll just ask everybody. This is sort of one of the lightning rounds. You've got about 20 seconds here.

STENNER:

(OFF-MIKE) the clock then and I'll start, Congressman Kline.

I think that for the United States Air Force, as we in fact, attempt to grow in new mission areas, the biggest issue we're going to have is getting the right balance of the Active and the Reserve components in all of those mission sets so we can be as strategic reserves that we can leverage to do that operational capability that we provide on a daily basis.

And in the Air Force construct of the AEF, the Air Expeditionary Force, we provide that on a rotational basis so we can do it in a sustainable manner. And if we can do that with predictability, then we can sustain that for quite some time.

Whatever we can do to drive predictability into the dwell, drive predictability into the length of tour, provide predictability for the family and for the employer, we'll be able to tell our folks and the expectation control that comes with that, will allow us to sustain that operational capability that are all providing on a daily basis.

KLINE:

General?

BERGMAN:

Sir, no question, predictability is the number 1 driver for the Reservists. Because they're planning a parallel life that they -- we all have families. It doesn't make any difference whether you're Active or Reserve. But the Reservist has that employer. So for them to balance that civilian career, predictability is number 1.

Recruiting and retention are continuous. A good unit, a good command is always focusing on that. Equipping is sequential. If you're in year 1 of dwell time, just getting back from a year of deployment, you don't necessarily need the equipment at that point in that dwell time that you will need in year 3, 4, of 5.

So we just need to make sure that there's a consistency, again, in the planning of the predictability of the dwell time.

Thank you.

KLINE:

General Stultz?

STULTZ:

My fear? The Army Reserve is the enablement force for the combat force. We are the combat support services force.

As we decrease forces in Iraq, we don't see the same level of decrease in enablers. And so they still have to have the doctors. They still have to have the logisticians. They still have to have to have the military policemen.

At the same time, when you see increases in, let's say Afghanistan, the first thing they ask for is the enablers to get in there first to set the theater before they bring in the combat force. So that's my concern.

And what I would agree with Jack here is, we've got to get predictability, but it's like Mike Rochelle said, the appetite that's out there just does not go down. And so my soldiers when I get out to visit with them, they're proud of what they're doing.

But they say, what are you doing for me? Are you going to do anything about the retirement age? Are you going to do anything about medical care? And you going to do

anything about any of those things, because you're asking more of me. But I don't see in return, you giving back as much.

KLINE:

OK.

STULTZ:

So that's what I'm focused on.

KLINE:

General Vaughn?

VAUGHN:

Sir, this is a comment, this thing about great pride in the forces is exactly right. You know, in our communities, it just runs over. And it goes back to the predictability thing that we took off so hard after. And part of that is making sure our formations are completely full so we're not cross-leveling. And next thing you know, somebody doesn't have the predictability. They think they're not going and then next, here they come.

So that's why we've, I mean, attacked seriously with the great change in our organization that we've got going. And while we're attacking this delayed entry program in TTHS thing is next.

In order to get there, I just hope we don't, you know, let the air completely out of the tires on recruiting and retention. Now, we all know that we're going to take this down some, and we'll all feel for where that's at. But to attract today's great soldiers and families, we know there's a value proposition that still has to be there.

And at some point in time, if we let it all the way out -- and I'm not saying we've got to keep bonuses all the way up -- and I'm not saying we don't have to -- we need the same amount of advertising 00 but there's some things you've got to do to keep it up there in the face of America.

And so I would ask that you just watch that very closely.



Thanks.

KLINE:

OK. Admiral?

DEBBINK:

Congressman Kline, I think you're right on that our sailors are terrifically proud to be serving today. And I think the most important thing we need to continue to do is to give them what I call real and meaningful work to do every day when they're employed by the Navy.

And that also goes right with the mobilizations, that we make sure that we're completely and fully validating every billet, and that we send them to a job that they're trained and qualified to do, such that when they come home or when they call home and their spouse or their family asks them, how are things going, they say, great. It couldn't be better. And thank you for allowing me to serve.

And that leads me into the other piece and that is to make sure we keep supporting our families. And I know that all of us at the table here have that joint commitment to each other that we would support any servicemember's family anywhere, any time they need it.

And those are the two most important pieces I would offer, sir.

KLINE:

Thank you.

General?

WYATT:

Congressman Kline, on behalf of the Air National Guard, I share my sentiments of General Stenner, Air Force Reserve. Everything he said is right on target with the predictability.

My concern is that we need to continue focusing on the real strength of all of our

services, and that is our people. We have created an environment that is composed of not just salary, but bonuses, medical benefits, how we approach sexual assault, PTSD, wounded warrior, yellow ribbon, reintegration programs. And we have created an environment that they like, that they are willing to deploy in record numbers, and stay with us in record numbers.

I think we need to be cognizant that when we change any one of those elements, we change the entire environment. And I think we need to be cognizant of that.

And let me close by just saying that not only do we need to continue to focus on airmen, soldiers, sailors, Marines. But we also need to continue focusing on their families and in the case of the Guard and the Reserve, especially, the employers. We can never forget the employer piece.

KLINE:

Thank you.

Admiral?

MAY:

Thank you, sir, for the opportunity to comment. I would say that our best recommendation is that we don't cut any existing programs. And we support the budgets that we have in place.

One of the unique things that the Coast Guard enjoys is the strong propensity from our Active duty members to move over from the Active duty component to the Reserve program. And they do that for a number of reasons.

And as General Stultz pointed out, we invest heavily in our people. In the Coast Guard, when young men and women come into our service, we invest in their education. We invest in their training.

We treat them as if they're going to be a lifelong member of our organization. And many are, but we also have the ability for those folks to move from the active duty over to the reserve component -- medical -- all those sort of services that you all have supported and made available for our young men and women and their families. All enter into those decisions that they make as who their employer's going to be.

So I would say, we need to continue up on those benefits and those services for our young men and women that serve in our military.

Thank you.

KLINE:

Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for your indulgence.

DAVIS:

Thank you. I appreciate the question.

And we're always trying to identify what it is that, number 1, keeps you up at night, and that we need to try and resolve with you.

You mentioned predictability. Several of you did. And there are some elements of that I know that we can't control. But of those that we can, what do you find to be the biggest obstacles to try and impress upon people we need to get right?

You may address this, but is there, of those elements, what is it you know certain things, and yet, you know, maybe those are issues that we have a difficult time identifying?

And particularly, I think, General Vaughn, as your exiting as well, are there some things that you know to be true that you just want to go out and on the top of rooftops and let people know about?

VAUGHN:

Madam Chairwoman, on predictability, I think you can tell from the other answers, you know, the things that keep me up and going on this, is exactly what I've said and I'm not going to come off of it. We've been on a strategic plan for four years to get this right, that we entered into this with the greatest bunch of soldiers that you could possibly have.

But we were a 75 percent force. Even at a 100 percent or 90 percent, we only had 75 percent soldiers in our formations. And so taken the strategic moves along with this

subcommittee that gave us the tools to do that, has been an enormous thing.

And the predictability thing -- and I talked about it a second ago -- in order to get our system, our flawed system correct, we are asking for a huge culture change from the Army National Guard.

And, you know, the whole 54, that's a big deal. We tell the 54, you're the, you know, the 50 states, three territories and D.C.; 54 is the -- you know, is the weakest thing we have, you know, getting everybody together.

But when you get them all organized on the objective is the strongest thing we have. And we're organized on whipping this delayed entry problem and then going for the TTHS, which will give predictability within means to those formations.

Now, whatever the nation asks us to do, and that's the job of everybody up here, to be ready, you know, when the nation or the state says I need this formation, then we've got to give it to them. I'm telling you, we're so much better, but we're not quite, still not quite there yet.

And so we're going to get this predictability thing done right within bounds. I wish it was five years back. I wish it was four years back. I wish it was three years back. But I don't want the thing that says 25 percent of those soldiers that are really going in that formation, and they don't know it yet because they're going to be (inaudible) in there.

And that's what we've got to fix. That's a family problem. I saw it years ago.

We'd come home and have these great formations that we come back, Congressman Kline, and we've hit 80 percent of them, 80 percent of the families would be there, but there would be onesies and twosies getting on buses going someplace back to their families and they weren't getting the welcome home ceremonies. And they weren't part of the family readiness groups either, that took place during that time.

So we've owed it to our families and our soldiers to fix those things. And you've helped us fix those things. And we're close to it and we just want to stay on track.

STENNER:

Madam Chairwoman, if I could?

Predictability is 1-1, 1-5 dwell. But I would dearly love to not have to tell anybody it's predictable at 1-1. There are stress career fields. There are low-density, high-demand

career fields. There are places that we need to add additional capability, whether it for the Air Force, be it a unit program or for the Air Force Reserve, individual mobilization augmentees are where we can make it predictable at a level they -- we need them or like them to participate as opposed to a continuous participation.

To get to that point, we need to look at those additional assets that we might need for the future, to go to those particular areas where we can serve the capability the best. If we don't, we end up offsetting what's in the current portfolio, which again, will add the risk to others and continue in the stress to low-density, high-demand arena.

So the additional resources required to fix those, would be one of the things that I would be after first of all to get the predictability to the place we want it, 1-5, 1-4, 1-3 dwell, somewhere in there.

DEBBINK:

I would offer that right now, with the Navy Reserve, we have about 27,000 sailors that are mobilizable. They're ready and they are outside of their dwell. And that sounds great, but what happens is you get into the one eaches, you know, the particular communities that say for example, intel.

In other areas, where we know where our redlines are. And provide that we don't push our sailors past those red lines, the 1 to 5. If we do, then we give them the added benefits which are in the law, and if we need to push them even further, that we look at making sure we're compensating them for it. They continue to come to fight for us.

WYATT:

Madam Chairwoman, on behalf of the Air National Guard, I think the thing that keeps me awake at night is trying to assess and answer the question, are my airmen properly trained? Are they properly equipped? And are they properly led.

And I think the answer to that is yes. I know it is. With the help of the United States Air Force and the Air Force Reserve, the total joint force, especially as we focus on the overseas fight.

My concern though, is that the fight we cannot lose is the fight here in the homeland. And I think a recognition from a Guard perspective that we are a dual-mission force, that we have not only the fight overseas to be concerned with, but the fight here at home in support of governors, is one that I hope we don't lose focus. Because I've got to answer

that question for my airmen in both fights, not just one.

MAY:

Madam Chairwoman, I think our biggest concern is really our capacity. That's the only thing that's really limiting us. It's our greatest challenge in every day, in our business where we spread ourselves. As Admiral Allen, our commandant, often likes to say, business is good. But the Coast Guard needs to grow. And that's both our active-duty and our reserve component together.

If you look at our 41,000 Active duty and our about 8,000 Reserve. That's a total force of less than 50,000. To give that little perspective, that's about the size of the New York City Police Department. Only our jurisdiction is worldwide.

So that's our biggest concern we have for the future. And I think through our long history of service to the American people, the unique capabilities that the Coast Guard brings, not only to national defense, but also, to our homeland security. We're a great investment for the American public.

So I would say if there's an opportunity that the Coast Guard would be a great investment for the American people.

DAVIS:

May I just follow up for a second, Admiral? Your request authorization, is that -- do you see that as being actually quite different from where you really anticipate and expect to be at that 10,000 level?

MAY:

Ten thousand is where we hope to be. We've had obviously budget challenges in getting there. We continue to be on that track to get to 10,000. We'd certainly like to get there.

As I've said, we hope to grow the active duty. The Reserve needs to grow right along with that. And each year, we look for opportunities to do that. And we will continue to do so.

DAVIS:

OK. Thank you.

We'll turn to Mr. Wilson?

WILSON:

Thank you.

And, Admiral Debbink, thank you for being here today. Your first appearance. I wanted to commend your personnel. I had the opportunity to see the Seabees in Fallujah and they were helping build the infrastructure of a civil society. And so the Navy Reserve (inaudible) sailors have really made a difference. And I want to commend you.

Also, Admiral May, I'm happy to be here with you, to have the Coast Guard involved. I grew up in the neighborhood of the Coast Guard base at Charleston, South Carolina. I was always impressed by the professionalism of the young people I saw serving.

And I represent, now, the communities of Buford and Hilton Head Island. And so it's really reassuring to know of your capabilities and professionalism of the Guard.

Suddenly, the people need to know, indeed, the Coast Guard is unique. And also, you need to point out that it's non-redundant compared to the other DOD Reserve components. Can you go through that?

MAY:

Yes, sir. Thank you for asking and thank you for your comments on our Coast Guard folks in South Carolina, especially Charleston.

The Coast Guard Reserve is unique in that we certainly are very similar to the other Reserve components in that we are a surge capability. We're an additional force for Active duty component. We are there for all aspects of Title 10.

What makes the Coast Guard Reserve a little bit unique in that we also can be involuntary recalled on Title 14. That's a statute that the Secretary of Homeland Security enjoys where he can recall Reservists in support of a national emergency of any nature.

That's what we used to respond to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita. And that provides an extra level of opportunity for member of the Coast Guard Reserve to respond in support of the

country, for whatever the need may be.

WILSON:

And during Katrina, what was the level of search and rescue that -- it was a record, wasn't it, that the...

MAY:

Yes, sir. Thirty-three thousand individual saved, which was a record for the Coast Guard. On an average year, it's about one- seventh, so that was about seven years worth of rescue within that short period of time.

WILSON:

Well, the American people need to know of the extraordinary success.

General Wyatt, I'm really grateful to have visited the joint air base, McIntyre joint air base in the (inaudible), the pride of persons serving in the Swamp Fox Squadron there is phenomenal.

In fact, two weeks ago, I visited Iwo Jima, which is now a Japanese air base. And when I entered, there was a picture of the Swamp Fox Squadron on the wall. As you come into the right. And it's the only picture. And it was signed by D-Dog Pennington (ph) and the others of the squadron. And it made me very proud that our Air National Guard is renowned around the world.

Also, I congratulate you that for the first time since 2002, the end strength has been achieved by the Air National Guard. But a concern that was expressed in your message to us was the lack of a personnel strategic plan linking recruiting and retention programs to an organizational strategic plan.

Can you explain why a lack of a strategic, personal plan, that this needs to be addressed?

WYATT:

Yes, sir, Mr. Wilson, the situation in the past has been that in my opinion, the Air



National Guard was reactionary and a lot of the recruiting and retention efforts that we had, we were reacting to Iraq. We were reacting to certain downsizings. We were reacting to events that prevented us from being a look-forward force.

We have taken steps over the last couple of years initiating what we call strategic planning system, a field-driven process primarily worked by the Assistant Adjutant General in each of the 54 jurisdictions where the subject matter expert advice from my staff to formulate a plan that meshes extremely well with the United States Air Force sees in emerging missions.

And the objective is to take our recruiting and retention plan and link it up with the vision we have as an organization now in concert with the United States Air Force so that we can more effectively leverage the dollars that we do have in recruiting and retention.

Instead of just going for end strength, we will now target different job skills, different skill sets, different civilian-acquired skills that make the Air National Guard strong. We can do that while we look forward to emerging missions. And instead of being a reactionary force, being a proactive force.

WILSON:

Thank you very much.

DAVIS:

Mr. Kline? Do you have any more questions?

KLINE:

Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was thinking about the officer balance issue, General Stultz, that you were talking about. And there's sort of competition as they're moving back and forth between the active component and the Reserves.

And the Marine Corps has done this very differently for a long time. There just aren't any lieutenants in the Marine Reserve. Maybe there's one. I don't know, but fundamentally, they go and the Marine Corps the officers go into active component and then move into the Reserves and the very senior lieutenants are captains.

So the whole force structure of the officer structure is a little bit different. I'm not suggesting that the Army adopt that model, but I am suggesting that we explore every opportunity, is we're trying to get the leadership that we need into the Army Reserves and in any other component. We need to be open to perhaps a little bit different way of thinking about it.

And again, I'm not suggesting -- this is not about a record here -- I'm not suggesting the Army adopt us. But I would encourage all of you to look at non-traditional ways of adjusting the force.

I know that the Army Guard, for example, in Minnesota, aggressively years ago, went to high schools to recruit some would argue, in competition with -- using General Vaughn's words -- Mother Army. But it has paid some dividends where Army Guard in some other states relied on prior service.

And so again, I mean, I have a personal preference for one model or the other. But the importance that I would just offer to you -- and I'm not going to ask a question because it went way over my limit last time -- but just offer to you that we really ought to be looking across services and across components for the best practice and be willing to move out of the traditional realm.

And I'll just through that out there. And again, thank you for your marvelous service and the unbelievable service of the Reserve component in ways that we never dreamed of 10 years ago -- truly remarkable.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

DAVIS:

Thank you, Mr. Kline.

You know, one of the issues that you've all touched on I think in numerous ways is in many ways, that the Reserve competes with the Active duty and visa versa. You know, there's a real tension there. Do you also see that there's a great deal of duplication? And then there's some way that we need to get a handle on that.

What would you like to do?

(UNKNOWN)

Yes, ma'am. I'll speak. And I think I'll speak for my buddy here, Clyde. You're exactly right. What one -- to your point, sir. We have to break down this competition. We have to say, listen, in this day and age, individuals flow back and forth. They change jobs every four or five years.

That's the model that this generation grew up on. So this idea of recruiting a soldier for life, he's probably not going to stay on Active duty for life. He may flow into the Reserve, try civilian life for awhile, and he may flow back into the Active force after awhile.

We need to make that transparent, make that continuum service work. Right now, the continuum service in my respect, from my perspective is a one-way street. They want it to go to the active side, but making it easy to flow into the Reserve is not because of just trying to hold on to them. But recruiting.

The other panel, the question came up about the high schools. Our soldiers are already in the high schools. We recruit them when they're juniors in high school. And both the Army Reserve and the Guard has started the program -- the Guard started it first. I'll give them full credit, this GRAP, Guard Recruiter Assistance. We replicated it on the Army Reserve side, the Army Recruiter system.

This past year, we got 5,000 soldiers out of that. That's why our end-strength is growing the way it is. And it's kids in high school recruiting.

Now, there was concern just recently because of a high suicide rate amongst a recruiting unit down in Texas. And the question comes back, what are you doing? You're bringing a soldier back that's been on two or three deployments. Now you're putting him into a recruiting command, and you send him out to some remote area to recruit where he has no support base or whatever.

Our soldiers are already there. And so what (inaudible) told them is look, let us do the recruiting for the Active Army using our soldiers. I can take a soldier and say, you want to go on Active duty for a couple of years in your home town and recruit for the Army?

Stay in your Reserve unit while you're there. Drill with them on your monthly drills and everything, but do recruiting the other time. And free up the Active Army to take these NCOs and everything and put them back in their force.

Those are the kinds of things we need to look at where we're duplicating because...

DAVIS:

Is that idea resonating?

(UNKNOWN)

We're going to do a pilot test. General Ben Freakley with the Sessions Command and I have agreed and along with the Guard, to do some pilot tests for home town recruiting using Guard and Reserve holders instead of Active duty soldiers to recruit for the Army. Because who knows better, that community, than our soldiers who live there?

DEBBINK:

And the question goes right to a constant dialog we have in the Navy.

I'll give you two examples. One is our logistics community, or VR, which is almost 100 percent Reserve. And the active components that we need you to fly the C-40s, and supply the C-130s for us. And so that's a conversation we've had with them and that's where that capability resides.

And in contrast, perhaps, to Congressman Wilson's point, our Seabees, our Fighting Seabees, which I'll have the opportunity to see next week. I'm going over the theater myself and I'm very eager to follow your trip as well, sir, and congratulate them on their great support.

They make up part of our NECC, our Navy expeditionary combat command headquartered down in Norfolk, which is right now today, 51 percent Reserve and 49 percent Active. And they're doing some great work down there, some analytics to say, is that the right mix or not?

And is it the right mix for today when we're in the middle of these two fights. Or you know, what's the right mix for three or four years from now. And I think it's a very important question for us to get in. And we're working hard to answer that question.

DAVIS:

I mean, one of the other issues that comes up as well is retirement pay, and whether or not moving towards a retirement pay where Reserve offices are able to pick that up much earlier than their 60, 60 which I think we're trying to pick off a few months here and there. But I'm must wondering, is that something that you feel actually is a positive?

Does it give you more officers? Or does it also add another element of competition that perhaps maybe from the Active personnel would suggest that that's not the right direction to go?

(UNKNOWN)

If I could address that, Madam Chairwoman, our goal, and I think I would speak for the folks at this table, is to increase the length of the careers of fine, qualified, serving, enlisted and officer, whether the soldiers, sailors, Marines, Guardsmen, Coast Guardsmen, or whatever. The pay and the retirement systems that they buy into, should be recognizable through this generation of millennials.

This is, as I go through my life, I'm going to have my personal finance bag that I can add to and it's set up in such a way that those who are serving very well should reap the benefits, if you will, of that system.

DAVIS:

(Inaudible) comment on that?

All right.

STENNER:

Can I jump in for just a second, Ma'am?

Back to your original question as far as the seams or the apparent competition between Active and Reserve. When you look at it from a lens of what we are calling the Air Force (inaudible) Association where we have the similar, the same equipment, the same mission set, and we combine the active component with either a Guard or Reserve or visa versa.

What you've got is a single installation at a single unit is both flavors of Active and Reserve, which gives you the -- if you can get somebody on board, you put them a place that's no competition. They've added to the capability that's there.

It's very fiscally efficient, very much an efficient way to deliver that capability. And when you high somebody, you've got them. And they see each side of the house.

Now, I also think that the retirement piece is a very big incentive right now for not only

those who we are bringing on, but for those who are currently in, and are looking at alternatives that will allow them to bridge that time from the time they leave the service until they have to see the family with the retirement check.

And that's helpful to keeping in retention wise as well as recruiting.

DAVIS:

Great. Thank you.

Oh, General Wyatt?

WYATT:

I think your question, Madam Chairman, was in the context of retirements benefits. And I think what my airmen are telling me is that because of what they're being asked to do now as opposed to what they were asked to do 20 years ago, they're not necessarily looking for equal, but they're looking for equitable, which means fair.

And I think we've taken some steps recently to move in that direction. I'm not sure we're totally there yet. And I think when the airmen have the feeling that retirement system is equitable, then we will be able to compete with maybe a full-time retirement that might not be equal, but at least it'll be fair and equitable.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Mr. Wilson, did you...

WILSON:

Yes, thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

And, General Stultz, I'm glad you brought up about the GRAP (ph) program. I have two sons who are participating in that program. And these young people have credibility with their peers and colleagues. And they're able to explain about the training opportunities, educational opportunities, the leadership opportunities. One can tell firsthand of a year

serving in Iraq. Another has served in Egypt, and extraordinary opportunity for this young fellow.

Also, I'm very interested in (inaudible) and we have legislation pending relative to the age of retirement. And would you say that, by reducing the retirement age from 60 to more conformity to the Active forces, would this help in terms of retention as particular be a benefit that spouses would appreciate?

STULTZ:

Yes, sir. The -- I look at the retirement age being exactly that, a (inaudible) to what Jack Bergman was just saying 00 being able to retain those quality individuals that we want to keep. Because the challenge we've got in the Reserves, if you've gotten 20 good years of service, but you're not going to draw your retirement until 60, and there's no incentives, re-enlistment bonuses or anything else beyond 20 years -- so what's the incentive to stay?

And I've related story (ph), talking to a young sergeant who actually was a National Guard Sergeant, that when I came back from Iraq, and I asked him what he was going to do, and he said, I'm going to get out. And I said, why?

And he said the Army doesn't want me. I said, that can't be true. And he said, sir -- I said you're an NCO. You're an 88 mike truck driver, critical skills. A combat veteran. He said, but sir, I've got 22 years in and there's no incentive for me to stay. And Congressman Wilson's point, he said, I've got to go home and face my wife. And if I tell her I'm re-enlisting, she's going to say, what are they going to give you?

And when I say, nothing, she's going to say, you're volunteering to go back.

So there's got to be some connectivity to say, hey, there's a reason to stay once you're earned the eligible retirement because we're going to give you something. And I think lowering the retirement age for staying beyond 20 and some kind of formula would provide that incentive, not just for the individual soldier, but also for that family to say, yes, we're going to be able to do things earlier in life than what we've planned because you're staying.

And you're staying at a risk of another deployment. But there's a reason.

Yes, sir.

(UNKNOWN)

And I'm really encouraged and look forward to working with Chairwoman Davis. There're different formulas out there. The flat 55 -- the proposal of one year for every two over 20, which I think would be so helpful with spouses by using retirement points as a formula. And of course, adjusting as General Wyatt has urged that we provide for retro activity and equity for persons deployed to September the 11th, 2001, as opposed to what we finally got a breakthrough last year.

And again, thank you all for what you do for the young people of our country.

(UNKNOWN)

Yes, sir. As I travel around Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, whatever, and talk at Town Hall Meetings, one of the -- the number 1 question they ask me is, what are we going to do about retirement? It is on the mind of our soldiers.

DAVIS:

I think it's on everybody's mind right now, sir.

I appreciate that.

I had mentioned earlier that if, as we wrap up, you have something that you just really want to be certain to say today, that you didn't have an opportunity, to please, take that opportunity right now. And then we're going to wrap up.

Anybody have anything? You don't have to. I just want to be sure that you have that chance.

STENNER:

I can't resist the urge, you know. Madam Chairwoman, very quickly, we're looking at challenging times today. We're looking at new mission sets for tomorrow. We're looking at growing in the appropriate mission sets to do what we need to do. And unmanned aerial systems, ISR, and that Air Force three component Air Force that stays proportional with every one of those mission sets is going to need an increase one way or the other in all three.

The Reserve is a very cost-effective and efficient way to sustain that strategic Reserve and leverage that to the operational force that we are today.



So I'm ready, willing, and able to take this Air Force Reserve to the future. Thank you very much for your help.

BERGMAN:

Madam Chairwoman, the Marine Corps' never going to let you down, whether it be Active Reserve. Thank you for the continued support of the entire committee and the Congress.

STULTZ:

Just briefly, yes. Thanks, obviously, for all that you're doing for us, and your support. You asked what keeps me awake at night? It's worrying about those soldiers who are out there that need our help, that are -- they come back. They demobilize. They're back in their civilian life. And then they discover or we discover they have problems.

We've got to take care of those soldiers and we've got to make it easy that when we identify a soldier that has PTSD or TDI or something else, we can get them into the medical treatment system they need without the bureaucracy that's out there right now. That keeps me awake at night.

But thanks for your support.

DAVIS:

Thank you. And we will be having some hearings on that. Thank you.

(UNKNOWN)

Chairwoman, same thing: thanks for your support. I agree with jack. You know, the youngsters are coming and facing the dilemmas that they have, you know, with the jobs and families and whatnot. I think it keeps u s all awake at night. Thank you.

DEBBINK:

Chairman Davis, I just want to echo that, too, that the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration

programs and our support for our wounded and injured sailors and all our servicemembers and your support in helping fund those programs is extremely important to us.

And the other comment I would have back to the retirement benefits, and I believe we are working on this, but to look at that gray area, whatever, whenever somebody retires, whether it's 55 or 60, it cover, it allow them to take Tri-care Reserve Select through that period.

Now, even at full cost, which is some \$700 a month, but that allows them the continuity of care so that once they go on Tri-care, if they're injured or there's a problem that occurs when they're in Active duty, and they are no longer eligible for their, back to their Reserve health care, they have Tri-care that can take them through retirement age, ma'am.

Other than that, thank you for your support.

WYATT:

Chairwoman Davis, on behalf of the Air Nation Guard, thank you for the honor and privilege of testifying before you and the Ranking Member Wilson, and members of the subcommittee.

I think that we have a constitutional provision that's displayed there in the panel below your name that sets the rules of the game, if you will. I'm comforted by that fact, and I trust that the Congress will do its job. We will do our job.

And I thank you for your support.

MAY:

Chairwoman Davis, I have two thank yous. First, thank you and the committee for all that you do for our men and women of our military services. And we could not do the things that we do without your support and the help that you provided to them.

And then, secondly, thank you for having the Coast Guard here today as part of this hearing. Even though we're in the Department of Homeland Security, nearly all of the provisions and the regulations and policies that affect military members affect the Coast Guard as well as our other services.

So by having us here today, you have reiterated your recognition of that. And I thank you dearly for that. It's been an honor and a pleasure to represent the Coast Guard here

today. Thank you.

DAVIS:

Thank you.

Thank you all, very much. Thank you for your service. And we look forward to working with you as we have a number of issues that come before us.

Thanks so much.

CQ Transcriptions, March 3, 2009

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## List of Panel Members and Witnesses

### PANEL MEMBERS:

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REP. ROB WITTMAN, R-VA.

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